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SERMONS

ON THE

DIFFERENT STATES OF LIFE.

WITHDRAWN

ADAPTED TO ALL THE SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS OF THE YEAR.

BY THE

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TRANSLATED BY THE

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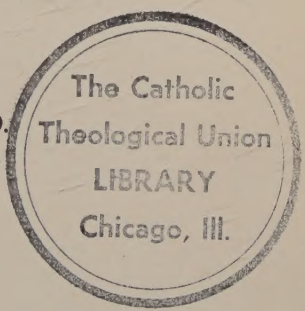

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CONTENTS OF VOLUME II.

ON THE DUTY OF PARENTS TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN, AS FAR AS THE SOULS OF THE LATTER ARE CONCERNED.

SERMON		PAGE
XXXIX.	On the Christian Training of Children,	7
XL.	On the Reasons why Parents should Bring Up their Children in a Christian manner,	19
XLI.	On the Teaching that Parents should Give their Children,	31
XLII.	On the Watchfulness of Parents Over their Children,	47
XLIII.	On the Due Chastisement of Children,	58
XLIV.	On the Paternal Chastisement of Children,	70
XLV.	On the Good Example that Parents should give their Children,	80
XLVI.	On the Necessity of Parents Giving Good Example to their Children,	92

ON THE DUTIES OF PARENTS TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN IN TEMPORAL MATTERS.

XLVII.	On the Duty of Feeding and Supporting Children,	106
XLVIII.	On the Great Care that Parents must Take of their Children, as far as Temporal Things are Concerned,	118
XLIX.	On the Usefulness of Alms-giving for the Temporal Welfare of Parents and Children,	131
L.	On the Usefulness of Alms-giving for Eternal Life,	145
LI.	On the Just Claims that the Poor Souls in Purgatory have on our Help,	159

ON THE MUTUAL OBLIGATIONS OF SUPERIORS AND INFERIORS.

LII.	On the Duties of Subjects to their Spiritual and Temporal Superiors,	170
LIII.	On the Duties of the Laity towards Priests,	184
LIV.	On the Duties of Masters and Mistresses towards their Servants,	197

SERMON PAGE

LV. On the Duties of Servants towards their Masters and Mistresses, - - - - - - - - - - 209
LVI. On the Evil of being Too Much Occupied, - - - 224
LVII. On the Guiltiness of a Too Busy Life, - - - - - 237

ON THE STATE OF THE RICH.

LVIII. On the Goodness of God towards the Rich, - - - 250
LIX. On the Ingratitude of the Rich towards God, - - - 262
LX. On the Duty of the Rich towards the Poor, - - - 274
LXI. On the Vain Excuses of the Rich with regard to Alms-giving, - - - - - - - - - - - 289

ON THE STATE OF THE POOR.

LXII. How Deserving of Help the Poor are, - - - - - 304
LXIII. On the Decent Poor, - - - - - - - - - 318
LXIV. On the Happiness of the Poor, - - - - - - 332

ON THE CONTENTMENT OF EACH ONE IN HIS STATE OF LIFE.

LXV. On the Divine Decree, which has Appointed a State and Condition of Life for Each One, - - 350
LXVI. On the All-wise Providence of God in Arranging Different States of Life, - - - - - - - 363
LXVII. On the Contentment of Each One in his State of Life, as far as the Service of God is Concerned, - - 378
LXVIII. On the Contentment of Each One in his State of Life, as far as the Dangers of the Soul are Concerned, - - 391
LXIX. On the Childlike Confidence with which Every One ought to Abandon Himself to Divine Providence, 402

ON THE GOOD USE THAT EACH ONE IN HIS STATE OF LIFE SHOULD MAKE OF TIME.

LXX. On the Redeeming in Old Age of Lost Time, - - 418
LXXI. On Making a Good Use of Present and Future Time, Especially for Young People, - - - 432
LXXII. On Shrove-Tide, - - - - - - - - - - 445
LXXIII. On Morning Prayer, - - - - - - - - 457
LXXIV. On the Use and Nature of Morning Prayer, - - - 467
LXXV. On the Examination of Conscience in the Evening, - 480
LXXVI. On the Use of the Present Time, - - - - - - 493
Index of Sermons, - - - - - - - - - - 507
Alphabetical Index of Subjects, - - - - - - - 516

ON THE DUTY OF PARENTS TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN, AS FAR AS THE SOULS OF THE LATTER ARE CONCERNED.

THIRTY-NINTH SERMON.

ON THE CHRISTIAN TRAINING OF CHILDREN.

Subject.

Parents must train their children most carefully for the end of their creation. 1st. This is commanded by the natural and the divine law. 2d. The eternal salvation and happiness of the children require it.—*Preached on the fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Dedit illum matri suæ.—Luke vii. 15.
"He gave him to his mother."

Introduction.

Why does Christ give the son to his mother? The young man would certainly have gone to his mother of his own accord, after having been raised from the dead. But our Lord wished to remind the mother that she must henceforth confess that she would never have recovered her son, if Christ had not restored him to life by a miracle. Christian parents, do you ever think who it is from whom you have received your children? They are gifts of God, bestowed upon you by the Father and Creator of all, and without Him you could not have one such gift. But that is not what I wish to speak of now. Do you ever, do you frequently, think why and to what end God has given you your children? You

must train them up carefully; that you know well enough. But how, and for what, must you train them? For the end of their creation, for which God has made them. That is the only object you must have in bringing up your children, as I shall now prove. This is a very important matter, on which the salvation of many souls depends; and I am forced to speak of it by the great neglect that many parents are guilty of in this respect, and by the command of the holy Father Ignatius, who lays it down as a rule for preachers to explain this subject frequently and impressively. I say, therefore, to-day of that duty in general—

Plan of Discourse.

Christian parents, bring up your children most carefully for the end of their creation. This is commanded by the natural and the divine law. As I shall show in the first part. The eternal salvation and happiness of your children require it. As I shall prove in the second part.

Would that I had a tongue of fire, and a voice of thunder, to impress you all deeply with this truth, on the knowledge and fulfilment of which the salvation of almost all men depends! Thou, oh, God, canst do what Thy poor instrument cannot; give me, then, oh, almighty Master, the grace that I now ask through the intercession of Mary, and all the holy angels guardian.

Nature teaches all wild beasts to bring up their young for the end for which they are made.

What am I about to do? To admonish parents to bring up their children with the greatest care, for the end for which God has created them! And to whom am I going to speak? To human beings, endowed with reason! And what sort of human beings are they? Are they Turks, heathens, barbarians, who have grown up in a wilderness, and know nothing of eternity? No; they are Christians, who have received supernatural sights, and who know the duty that I am about to admonish them of! But, be still, my tongue; do not disturb Christian ears with such a useless and vain exhortation! Ye birds of the air, and wild beasts of the field; ye lions, tigers, bears, serpents, and most savage animals that nature has produced, you must be my audience now; for certainly my subject is more necessary for you than for Christians! But hold! I am afraid that if I attempted to accuse you of negligence in this matter, you would soon put an end to my speech, you would spring upon me, and tear me to pieces with your claws and fangs. Such is the case, my dear brethren; the wild beasts would not permit it; for they are so careful in training their young for the purpose that

God intended them for, according to their nature, that they require neither exhortation nor admonition therein. What! the lion would say to me; wilt thou teach me to train up my young? Have I ever been wanting therein? They are created for prey, and it is my daily task to teach them that while they are young. Woe to him who would venture even to approach my den, to injure them, or to take them away! What! the bear would growl forth; do I not work diligently to teach my cubs, until I have given them all the knowledge that nature requires from them? The falcon says: Do I not teach my young to pounce upon their prey? The eagle: Do I not show mine how to fly, as the Creator Himself gives testimony.[1] What! the hen would cry out; see how carefully I always train up my chickens; how I shelter them under my wings the whole night, and the greater part of the day; how I work continually to provide them with food, although I must often suffer hunger myself; how I defend them against cats and dogs, although I know that the latter are stronger than I, and how I spread out my wings and ruffle up my feathers so as to protect my chickens, and save them from every danger! And so all the lower animals might say to me: It is useless for thee to teach us our duty in this respect; nature has taught us sufficiently already.

How much more should not reasoning beings know that.

And must I now exhort reasoning beings, supernaturally enlightened Christians, to their duty in this respect? Must I accuse them of negligence, nay, can I even imagine that they are wanting in an obligation that nature has taught even to the most ferocious animals? Truly, Christian parents, I seem to be guilty of great presumption. You have just cause to be indignant with me. "Be angry,"[2] and avenge yourselves on me; I confess my fault. Accuse me, and be my judges, for having publicly insulted and offended you! Would to God that I were wrong! Would that I could be persuaded that my suspicions in this matter were ill-founded, and that not a single Christian parent could be found guilty of neglecting in the least that most important duty of bringing up children for their last end!

But there is a great want herein, with most people. Children get training, but for their bodies.

But, alas, what an immense number of parents might come forward and say that I am quite right! Are men, then, worse and more cruel in this point than the most savage beasts? Unfortunately, it is only too true, and daily experience convinces us of it. Most people train up their children very carefully from their youth; they are not wanting in that. But to what do they train them? To eat, drink, stand, or walk becomingly; cats and

[1] Sicut aquila provocans ad volandum pullos suos.– Deut. xxxiii. 11. [2] Irascimini!

dogs do as much as that for their young. To speak, read, write, and dress properly; that is no more than heathens and infidels do for their children. To what tends the greatest care of parents for their sons and daughters, when the latter are past the years of childhood? Some try merely to teach them some respectable trade, so that they can earn their living. Others, thinking that their children are not obliged to work, train them up to speak foreign languages, or to the liberal arts and sciences, or instruct them in commerce, or send them to travel in foreign countries, that they may know something of the world and its customs, and thus be able to deal with people in different offices and employments. Or they try to settle their daughter well in life, or to procure a benefice, or a rich marriage, for their son; or, finally, their whole aim is to be able to leave their children well off, after their own death. Such is the chief care of most parents; it is the only one of very many! If they are successful in that, their whole duty is fulfilled, as they think, and they have nothing more to trouble about. It certainly is a care that cannot be found fault with; and would that all fathers and mothers attended to it properly, and gave their children a decent trade or profession. If they did, there would not be so many idlers and good-for-nothings going about the streets.

But the souls are generally neglected.

But, Christian parents, is that the only end for which your children were entrusted and given to you by their Creator? Have they come into the world for no other purpose than to care for their bodies, which will one day become the food of worms? Is it their only object to earn their bread, and to live respectably in the eyes of the world? Have they not a soul—one only soul—one immortal soul? Does not that concern you at all? Have their immortal souls nothing to hope for, nothing to fear after this life? Faith, where art thou? There is an eternal fire, to which your children may be condemned; forget it not. There is an eternal Heaven, in which they may rejoice; forget it not. To this latter they are called by God. They are entrusted to you by their Creator that they may attain it. The principal thing, the only object for which they are created, is to live piously, to fear and love God, and to be eternally happy. If they do not attain that end, it were better for them never to have been born. If you do not train them up for it, you are not the fathers and mothers, but the butchers and murderers of your children, whose souls God will demand from you.

Although the law of

If the natural law is not enough to convince you of this obli-

gation, hear the divine law, as St. Paul declares it to you: "And you, oh, father," do you know what you have to do? "You must bring up your children."[1] To what? To eating and drinking? To gaming, dancing, and fencing? To the arts and sciences? No; they are not created for those things: "Bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord."[2] "Rejoice not in children if they be multiplied," says the Holy Ghost by the Wise Ecclesiasticus, "neither be delighted in them, if the fear of God be not with them. For better is one that feareth God, than a thousand ungodly children; and it is better to die without children, than to leave ungodly children."[3] When the Prophet Elias had restored to life the son of the widow of Sarephta: "And Elias took the child," says the Sacred Scripture, "and brought him down from the upper chamber to the house below, and delivered him to his mother."[4] Mark, my dear brethren, the word *deposuit*, "he brought," as if to signify, according to the force of the Latin word, that the mother should look upon her son as a loan made to her, a deposit entrusted to her charge, which she must look after very carefully so as to restore it to its lawful Owner uninjured.

God commands them to be cared for specially.

Oh, Christian parents, St. John Chysostom says: "What a great and precious deposit God has left with us in our children! Let us look after them with the greatest care, so that no crafty thief may steal them away from us,"[5] but that we may be able to restore them to Him from whom we have received them. When your children were brought home, after having received baptism in the Church, you received their souls, and henceforth were bound to honor them; not as your children, but, what they really were, as children of God, and to take them from the hands of the priest as a sacred treasure given to you by him in the name of God, who thereby wishes to say to you: You have offered this child, the fruit of my blessing, to Me. I love it, and will henceforth be its only father and mother. Now I lend it, I deposit it with you, but with the strict obligation, on your side, to bring it up according to the spirit and law of my Gospel, and to restore

The souls of children are deposited by God in the parents' hands, and He will demand them again.

[1] Et vos patres, educate filios vestros.

[2] Educate illos in disciplina et correptione Domini.—Ephes. vi. 4.

[3] Ne jucunderis in filiis, si multiplicentur, nec oblecteris super ipsos, si non est timor Dei in illis. Melior est enim unus timens Deum, quam mille filii impii; et utile est mori sine filiis, quam relinquere filios impios.—Eccl. xvi. 1, 3, 4.

[4] Tulitque Elias puerum, et deposuit eum de cœnaculo in inferiorem domum, et tradidit matri suæ.—III. Kings xvii. 23.

[5] Magnum habemus pretiosumque depositum, filios. Ingenti illos servemus cura, atque omnia faciamus, ne fur nobis id astutus auferat.

it to Me in the same state in which you now receive it. And what state is that? When you brought that child to Me first, it was still a child of Adam, a slave of the devil, laboring under a malediction. Now that I have washed it in my Blood, cleansed it from original sin, and adorned it with sanctifying grace, it is a holy child of God, a vessel of grace, a living temple of the Holy Ghost, a citizen of Heaven, a companion of the angels, an heir of my glory and happiness. Such is the state in which you must restore it to Me; and woe to you if by your neglect in training it, it should be led astray from Me and be lost! Therefore, Christian parents, all your desires must tend to preserve that heavenly treasure for your children; all your ambition must be centred therein, that you gain eternal honor for them; all your care and trouble must be employed to restore them uninjured to their heavenly Father.

Most parents lose that treasure, to the eternal ruin of their children.

But, alas, I must cry out, with St. John Chrysostom, there is nothing that many parents think less of, than the last end of their children; nothing they care less about, than bringing them up for God and for Heaven! "Hardly any one provides God for his children; some provide them with honors, others with dignities," and arts, and sciences, "others with riches," and treasures, and the comforts and conveniences of life: "Hardly any one provides God for his children."[1] Oh, deplorable blindness! there is hardly any one who tries, as he ought, to gain Heaven for his children! If many a father and mother were commanded by God, under the severe punishment of eternal damnation, to bring up their sons and daughters to worldly vanities, they could not do more in that way than they do now. If the devil were to say to many a father and mother: You must give up your son, your daughter, to me, could they do more to satisfy his desire than they do now? If they were addressed in the words of Christ to St. Peter, when the latter was troubled about the fate of his fellow-Apostle, St. John: "What is it to thee? Follow thou Me."[2] Father, what is your son to you? Mother, why should you trouble about your daughter? Never mind your children's souls. Look after yourself, or be satisfied with providing them with food and drink. Look after their bodies, let their souls be. If, I say, many parents were thus spoken to by God, could they be more careless or neglectful in this matter, than

[1] Nemo filiis suis providet Deum. Alii honores, alii dignitates, alii divitias. Nemo filiis suis providet Deum.

[2] Quid ad te? Tu me sequere!

they already are? There are many who look after their horses and dogs with more care than after the immortal souls of their children. Miserable children! I pity your lot in being born of, and brought up by, such parents. It seems as if they had given you temporal life, only that they might drag you down to eternal death! Parents, if you have no fear of God and His commandments, you should be impelled to take all possible care of the souls of your children, at least by the thought that their eternal salvation requires that care. As I shall show in the

Second Part.

Fathers and mothers, you love your children, do you not? But what a useless question! Nature itself inspires you with love for your own flesh and blood. And you give sufficient proof, too, that you love them. What trouble mothers cheerfully take with their little children, day and night, is best known to themselves. How fathers work, and think, and labor incessantly, so as to leave their children well off, is taught us by daily experience. But do you really desire your children's welfare? Do you really wish to do them good? Then you must not grudge them the best and greatest good, but do all you can to secure it for them, namely, to gain for them the eternal happiness of Heaven. For how can they thank you afterwards for having given them this miserable life, which is over in a few years, if you do not gain eternal life for them? How can they be grateful to you for feeding and clothing them, if you prevent them from enjoying the never-ending banquet of Heaven? What can they think of you, although you may have had them instructed in many branches of knowledge, if you do not give them the real wisdom of Heaven, the knowledge and love of God? What is the use of your leaving them worldly riches, if they lose eternal treasures through your fault? In a word, how can they be grateful to you for bringing them into the world, if they cannot live forever with God in Heaven? To this, therefore, in preference to everything else, must be directed all your parental love and tenderness.

The children will not think much of their parents' care and trouble, if they do not go to Heaven.

But now, whether your children attain this highest good, or not; whether they are to burn forever among the demons in hell, or to rejoice eternally with the angels in Heaven, depends mainly on yourselves, oh, parents, and on how you train up your children! For on the good or bad training they

The gaining of this depends mostly on their training.

get depends, generally speaking, the good or bad life of your children, which is terminated by a good or a bad death, and followed by a happy or a miserable eternity. Your little children, oh, parents, says St. Basil, are like soft wax in your hands—you can give them any shape you please. They are like young plants, says St. John Chrysostom; do you wish them to grow up straight? do you prefer to have them crooked? It all lies with yourselves. They are like a canvas prepared for painting: you can paint on them whatever you please, a devil or an angel; an accursed, reprobate goat, or a sheep of the fold of Christ destined for Heaven. Plutarch relates of Lycurgus, the Spartan lawgiver, that as he was once addressing the people publicly in the market-place, and exhorting parents to bring up their children carefully, he brought two puppy-dogs on the stage, in sight of the people. One of these dogs had been trained for hunting, the other had been allowed to remain idle at home. He then placed on one side of the stage a dish full of bread and meat, and on the other side he let go a hare, when a strange thing occurred; the dog that had been allowed to remain at home sprang at once open-mouthed upon the dish, while the other paid no attention to the dish, and ran at once after the hare. Whereupon, Lycurgus cried out with a loud voice: Citizens! See what the force of training is: These dogs were alike in the beginning, but they have been made quite different by training!

Hence different manners on account of different training.

Christian parents, I say, how is it that there is often such a difference in the morals and life of children, who are of the same age, the same condition, state, and family, who have the same faith, and have been born in the same town, the same street, the same house? Examine the cause thereof, and you will find it to consist in nothing but the difference of training and bringing-up. Wencenlaus and Baleslaus were two brothers: the first was a very pious, mild, and righteous prince in Bohemia, the second, on the other hand, was a cruel tyrant; and what wonder? For the first was trained by his mother, Ludmilla, a pious and holy lady, to virtue and the fear of God, while the second was brought up and instructed by his mother, Drahomira, a wicked woman. But there is no need to go back to ancient times; we may find proof enough of this in our own days. If we take the trouble to examine the matter, we shall find in one household, that the children know all the chief parts of the catechism, that they kneel down to say their prayers every morning, and, as is the pious custom in every good Christian family, that they make their ex-

amination of conscience every evening carefully. In another house you will find that the children get up and go to bed when they please, and that in place of praying, they curse, swear, play, and indulge in useless conversation. In one family it is the custom for them to hear Mass every day, to go on Sundays and holy-days to the sermon and to catechism, and to be sent regularly to the Sacraments. In another, the sons frequent the tavern, the daughters go into dangerous company, for a whole month they neither see nor hear anything of the Word of God, or of what would benefit their souls. In one household, one hardly knows that there are daughters in it at all, because they are hardly ever seen out of the Church; in another, every one can easily be aware of their presence, because they spend their time at the window, or before the door, talking and laughing, even with persons of the opposite sex. In one household the children dress modestly, according to the law of Jesus Christ; in another, they ape all the vanities and extravagances of the world. In one family the sons and daughters are always occupied with work or study; in another, they are allowed to run idle about the streets, where they will certainly not learn much good. In one family they are trained to give up their own will, for the sake of doing the will of God; in another, each child does as he pleases; one thinks of nothing but eating and drinking, another is taken up with vanity and folly. And whence comes this great difference? From the difference in the training and teaching they received from their childhood upward. In one family the father and mother attend to their duty; in another, Christian doctrine, paternal vigilance, correction and chastisement, and good example are wanting. What wonder is it, then—how can it be otherwise—that young children live as they are taught or allowed to live? And therefore, among the Lacedemonians, of whom I have spoken already, the wise Lycurgus published a law that they were to observe strictly, and that was, that if the children committed any crime, not they, but their parents were to be punished for it, since the latter were really to blame. If the son did any wrong, the father was punished; if the daughter committed a fault, the mother had to bear the punishment; and the reason of that was, because all the faults of the children were attributed to a want of vigilance and care on the parents' part.

As children are in their youth, so generally

But according as children are accustomed to lead a pious or a wicked life in their youth, so will their after life be pious or wicked, as the Holy Ghost infallibly testifies by the Wise Man:

they remain in old age.

"A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it,"[1] as I have shown more fully already in the sermon on the text: "What an one, think ye, shall this child be?"[2] And the answer then was, as I proved by many reasons: It will be as it is in its youth, as it is brought up by its parents. Therefore, moralists answer the question, whether is it better to have a good natural disposition to piety, and a bad training, or a wicked disposition and a good training to virtue and piety, by saying that the latter is far better than the former.

Therefore their eternal salvation or damnation depends on their training.

From all that I have said up to this, you can easily conclude, Christian parents, that the eternal happiness or the damnation of your children depends on the good or bad training you give them; and therefore, if you love them sincerely and wish to secure to them the possession of the one thing necessary, you must train them up for their last end, that is, for true piety, for God and for Heaven, with the greatest care. And woe to you, if you are wanting in this most important duty! Woe to you, if by carelessness, or by not instructing them in the catechism and leading them on to good, or by giving them bad example, you prevent even one of your children from saving his soul, and drag him down to the eternal flames of hell! Even if you yourselves were pious, although that cannot really be the case if you deliberately neglect this important duty, without fulfilling which all your piety is not worth anything; even if you were to die a happy death and go to Heaven, a supposition which is as little likely to be realized as the other, what would your thoughts and feelings be, on the day of judgment, at seeing your own flesh and blood dragged down to hell by devils, when you know that you must think to yourself: I am the cause of it, I should have led my child to Heaven, and I have delivered him over to eternal torments, because I did not do my duty in training him as I ought! And now my child is lost forever!

The lost souls of children will cry out for vengeance on their careless parents.

What would you think if you heard your lost children crying out from hell to God for vengeance on you, the cause of their damnation? As St. Cyprian says, they might say: "We are not the cause of our own ruin; our parents have ruined us; they are the murderers of our souls."[3] Strict justice of God, we cannot find fault with thee! Thy sentence is, and remains, holy and just! We have deserved hell by our vicious lives; that we must confess! But our par-

[1] Adolescens juxta viam suam, etiam cum senuerit, non recedet ab ea.—Prov. xxii. 6.
[2] Quis putas, puer iste erit.— Luke i. 66.
[3] Non nos perdidimus, perdidit nos paterna perfidia! parentes sensimus parricidas!

ents are the cause of our wickedness, and of our damnation. "Our parents are the murderers of our souls!"[1] Demons of hell, we cannot reproach you for your cruelty; you are the executioners of divine justice, and therefore you have dragged us down to share in your punishment; we have deserved it! But our parents are the cause of that, because they did not bring us up better, and train us to virtue! "Our parents are the murderers!" It is my father, the son will say, who is to blame for my damnation. He never spoke to me of any but earthly and transitory things. He hardly ever said a word to me of God and Heaven. He often told me how to make my fortune on earth, hardly ever did he give me the means of saving my soul and securing eternal happiness. From him I learned to curse, swear, blaspheme, and give way to other sins of the sort that he was constantly committing. He never asked me, and never troubled himself about where, when, or with whom I went, whether I frequented the Sacraments, or heard Mass and sermon on Sundays and holy-days, or attended catechism. But if by accident I broke anything in the house, his anger against me burst forth in fearful curses. If I blasphemed the Name of God, spoke ill of my neighbor, lied, cursed, or swore, he never said a word to correct me. Our parents are our murderers! My mother is to blame for the loss of my soul, the daughter cries out from the flames of hell. I would have been modest, reserved, and humble, according to the law of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, if she had not, as soon as I was able to walk, trained me up to all sorts of worldly pomp and vanity. I kept my virginal purity and baptismal innocence unsullied, until she brought me into dangerous company, where I learned vice and wickedness. I was pious, until she sent me away to a foreign country, where I soon changed for the worse. I was chaste, until she allowed me to be idle, to go about wherever I pleased, and to walk and amuse myself in the evening, alone, with a person of the opposite sex! Our parents are our murderers! Cruel father, cruel mother, if you had taken a knife and stabbed me to the heart immediately after my birth; or if you had allowed me to die of hunger and thirst, you would not have been so cruel to me! Have you, then, brought me into the world for this? Mother, have you suckled me at your breast; father, have you worked to support me, only that your own flesh and blood should be condemned to suffer the pains of hell, and to curse God and you for all eternity? If you did not intend to lead me to Heaven, why did you bring me into the world? It would have

[1] Parentes sensimus parricidas!

been a thousand times better for me never to have seen the light of day, and to have remained in the abyss of my original nothingness. Would to God that I had been your dog, and not your son or your daughter: I would not now have to suffer these torments! You are the murderers of our souls! Thus will the lost souls of children cry out for vengeance on their parents.

Conclusion and exhortation to parents to fulfil their duty better.

Parents, what does your father's or mother's heart now say to you? What are you to do? If any of you have really a child in hell, whose damnation you are the cause of by not bringing up that child properly, what can you do now? Alas, the poor soul is lost, and you will never be able to remedy your mistake! Parents, do penance now for your past faults, that you may not be condemned to do fruitless penance for them in hell, with your unhappy child. Make up, by diligence and care with your remaining children, for the neglect with which your conscience now reproaches you. I repeat with St. Paul: "Fathers, bring up your children in the discipline and correction of the Lord."[1] Let it be your chief care to lead them on to the fear of God, to the love and practice of virtue, to a Christian, that is, a holy life, and to the kingdom of Heaven. All your love, your labor, and trouble, nay, even your devotions and good works are of no use, if you are guilty of deliberate and grievous neglect in this point. That is the principal duty that God and the natural law require from you in your state of life; and if you do not care about God, nor the natural law, it is the principal duty that the eternal salvation of your children, whom you certainly love sincerely, requires. Oh, happy parents who have now children in Heaven, to pray to God for you daily, and to praise and bless Him forever! Happy parents, whose greatest care hitherto has been to bring up your children to piety and virtue! What consolation it will be for you to find yourselves one day, along with your children, at the right hand of your Judge, and to hear those children proclaiming publicly, in presence of all mankind: My father, my mother, is the cause of my eternal happiness! Christian parents, let this thought impel you to train up your children in a holy manner. Amen.

[1] Patres, educate illos in disciplina et correptione Domini.

Another Introduction for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Ad terram prosternent te, et filios tuos qui in te sunt.—Luke xix. 44.

"They shall beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee."

Introduction.

Jesus weeps over the City of Jerusalem! What! over the walls and houses that are to be thrown down? No; that would be no reason why God should weep. He weeps over the people and their children, who then lived in the city. It was the thought of them that drew such bitter tears from the eyes of the merciful Saviour. Why? "They shall beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee."[1] Was it because they were to be beaten flat to the ground by a mere temporal calamity? No; for that would not give the Redeemer cause to weep. He foresaw that the parents and their children would be condemned to eternal death, on account of their many sins and vices. That was the reason why Jesus wept. My dear brethren, how many Christian towns and villages there are over which Jesus would have just cause to weep, on considering the parents and their children and the eternal ruin of very many of them! The children incur that ruin by the sins that they have been accustomed to commit from their youth, but the parents incur it because they are the cause of those sins, by bringing up their children in a careless and unchristian manner. Of this I will speak to-day. It is a subject of the greatest importance, etc.—*continues as before.*

FORTIETH SERMON.

ON THE REASONS WHY PARENTS SHOULD BRING UP THEIR CHILDREN IN A CHRISTIAN MANNER.

Subject.

Parents should bring up their children well, and in a Christian manner, for thereon depends, 1st, the temporal happiness, 2d, the eternal happiness, of the parents.—*Preached on the sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, on which the Feast of the Holy Angels falls.*

[1] Ad terram prosternent te, et filios tuos qui in te sunt.

Text.

Videte, ne contemnatis unum ex his pusillis.—Matth. xviii. 10. "See that you despise not one of these little ones."

Introduction.

Children, no matter how small, how poor, how lowly they are, are of great worth and value in the sight of God; so that He has given each one of them a Prince of Heaven, as companion, tutor, and guardian; therefore: "See that you despise not one of these little ones," nor scandalize them; "for their angels in Heaven always see the face of my Father who is in Heaven."[1] Christian parents, this warning and exhortation is addressed especially to you. Have you children under your care? "See that you despise not one of these little ones." Ah, above all, see that you do not look down upon them, but take the greatest possible care of them, so that not one may be lost! Oh, holy angels, forgive me if I seem to neglect you to-day, your feast-day, on which I should be bound for countless reasons to speak in your praise and honor! Yet, I know that I cannot honor or please you better, than by endeavoring to lead your charges on to their last end, to God and to Heaven, for that is the object of the care you take of them night and day. But the surest and best way of doing that is for the parents to bring up their children with the greatest care for their last end. Help me, therefore, to effect that, so that your joy may be full. Christian parents, bring up your children most carefully for their last end, that is to say, train them to be pious, to love and fear God, so that they may attain eternal happiness. That is required by the natural and the divine law, and the eternal salvation of your children, as you have heard in the last sermon. But if that is not enough for you, I shall now give you some more reasons, that ought to have even more effect on you than the first.

Plan of Discourse.

If you love your children, bring them up for their last end, for your own salvation and happiness depend thereon: Your temporal happiness, as I shall show in the first part. Your eternal happiness, as I shall show in the second part.

[1] Videte, ne contemnatis unum ex his pusillis. Quia angeli eorum in cœlis semper vident faciem Patris, qui in cœlis est.—Matth. xviii. 10.

Holy angels guardian, and thou in particular, Mary, Queen of angels, I rely upon your assistance, and repeat the text: "See that you despise not one of these little ones."[1]

The temporal happiness of parents consists in training their children well.

The temporal happiness that parents can expect to have from their children in this life consists in bringing up those children well, so that the latter are always ready to obey their parents, are always respectful, loving, and helpful to them in every possible way, and think nothing of such importance, after the service of God, as to give their parents consolation and joy. It is the debt that all children owe their parents; it is the greatest satisfaction that parents can seek and desire from their children. Consequently, if we hear of parents who enjoy that satisfaction, we say that they must be happy indeed, since they have such good children.

Children are not well trained unless they live piously.

Christian parents, tell me, how can you hope to have that comfort and consolation from your children, if you do not bring them up, from their earliest years, in the fear and love of God? No, it cannot be; for virtue, piety, and the fear of God alone can make children really obedient, respectful, and loving towards their parents. He who loves God, endeavors to fulfil His holy will in all things; therefore, since the will and commandment of God is: "Honor thy father and thy mother,"[2] obey and love them, a pious child must necessarily be most careful in observing this most important duty. On the other hand, if the son or daughter is disobedient to the father or mother, obstinate, ready to contradict them, fond of murmuring, complaining, and speaking against them, and so forth; I should say at once, without any fear of being mistaken, that such children are not pious, they have not the fear of God, they are wanting in virtue, inasmuch as they do not fulfil that important commandment of childlike reverence and love towards their parents. The Holy Ghost says of pious and god-fearing children, by the mouth of the Wise Man: "A wise son maketh the father glad."[3] By wisdom is here meant piety and the fear of the Lord, just as the impious are always called fools in the Sacred Scriptures.

Without the fear of God, they will cause trouble and sorrow to their parents.

Of these last we read in the same place: "But a foolish son is the sorrow of his mother."[4] We read in history that the tyrant Dionysius, wishing to be revenged on the philosopher Dione, put the son of the latter into prison, not to kill him, nor to torture

[1] Videte, ne contemnatis unum ex his pusillis.
[2] Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam.—Exod. xx. 12.
[3] Filius sapiens lætificat patrem.—Prov. x. 1.
[4] Filius vero stultus mœstitia est matris suæ.—Ibid.

him, for such a vengeance would not at all have satisfied his resentment; but in order to cause the philosopher greater grief, he placed his son in the power of a wicked man, that he might be taught all manner of vice. When the young man had spent a sufficient time in this school of iniquity, the tyrant gave him back to his father. And why did he do so? What was his object? He foresaw that the father would be more grieved and afflicted at seeing his son leading a wicked and impious life, than if the latter had been cruelly put to death before his eyes. Nor can it be otherwise. He who is unfaithful to God, is, generally speaking, unfaithful to men; he who dishonors God, will not show proper respect to his parents; he who disobeys God, will pay little attention to the commands and prohibitions of his parents; he who resists God, will be obstinate and stiff-necked with his parents; in a word, he who does not fear to offend God, will have still less fear of grieving his father and mother.

Their being pious and virtuous depends on the training they get.

But now, oh, parents, how your children are to be in this respect, depends principally, nay, almost entirely on you, and on the way in which you train them, as I have told you in the last sermon. Do you wish them to be wicked and impious? They will be so, if you are only careless of their souls. Do you wish them to be pious and God-fearing? They will be so, if you earnestly desire it, and train them up to it with care from their earliest years. God will give them more or less grace to lead a pious life, according as you are more or less diligent in fulfilling your duty, and in trying to make them good. St. Bernard went so far as to say that he never saw parents who sincerely desired to have good and pious children, and who were careful in training them up well, disappointed of their desires: "All parents," he says, "who destined their children to the service of God, and trained them up for it, obtained their wish."[1] Such was the experience of the mother of St. Louis, the mothers of Saints Edmund, Clement, Hugo, Luibert, of St. Edith, Ludgard, and many others; their only wish was to bring up pious sons and daughters to serve God. They spared no pains in training their children, so that the latter were innocent and good, although living in courts and in royal palaces, and exposed to many dangers of sin, and they became great servants of God. Try that plan also, Christian parents, and see whether it will not have the same result with your children; for it is on your training, I repeat, that

[1] Omnes parentes, qui filios Dei servitio destinarunt, et ad illud eos educarunt, voto suo potiti sunt.

it mostly depends whether they are to be good or bad, and consequently, whether they are to be a joy or a sorrow to you, whether they are to make you happy or miserable in this life. Think over the matter and see which you had better choose.

Parents have great comfort with good, great trouble with bad children.

Think, I implore of you, what an indescribable comfort and joy it must be for you to be able to say with truth: I am the father, or the mother of a holy child, who is always obedient, respectful, loving, and pleasing to God and man. Suppose, on the other hand, that through want of Christian training, your son is wicked, obstinate, unruly, given to drink and other vices, your daughter disobedient, immodest, and leading a scandalous life, so that your children are a disgrace to your family, and will obey neither you nor any one else,—I leave it to yourselves to say, could there be a greater trial for a father who loves his son, or a mother who loves her daughter? Especially when the parents must say to themselves: I am the cause of this misfortune, since I did not train up my wicked son as I should have done; I am the cause of it, because I was not careful in looking after my children; I am the cause of it, because I let them do as they liked, and gave way to their folly and obstinacy; I am the cause, because when they first went wrong, I, through a foolish and inordinate love, did not punish nor correct them; I am the cause of it, because I gave them bad example; I am the cause of it, because I did not keep them away from dangerous occasions and bad company! What a trial, I say, it must be for a father and mother who love their children!

This is shown by examples from Scripture.

What a trial it was for Agar to be turned away by Abraham, on account of her ill-reared son Ishmael, and to be obliged to wander about with him, hungry and thirsty, in the desert, as we read in the 21st chapter of Genesis! What a sorrow it was for David, who had not punished his son Absalom for having murdered his brother, to be attacked by that son and driven from his throne, and in the end to have to hear the sad news of the temporal and eternal death of his rebellious child! How great was the grief of the Patriarch Jacob, when the news was brought to him that his daughter Dina, whom he had allowed to go out to see the women of the country, was dishonored and disgraced! How great must have been the wailing and lamentation of those parents of whom we read in the 2d chapter of the Fourth Book of Kings, that they allowed their children to go out into the street and mock the Prophet Elisæus, at seeing two-and-forty of their unhappy offspring torn to pieces by wild bears!

From daily experience.

But it is not necessary to go back so far. Would to God that we had not daily experience of the same deplorable kind! Are there not parents enough, nowadays, who have nothing but trouble and sorrow from the very children to whom they looked for comfort and consolation in their old age, and to whom a foolish love made them too indulgent? Now they lament and complain: What an unhappy being I am! Could there be a greater trial on earth, than what I have daily to suffer from my own children? It seems that my son or daughter is actually accursed by God. They cannot be induced to say a prayer, to go to Church, or to join in any devotion; I dare not ask them to do anything, or they will do the contrary; if I reprove them, they are sure to have a sharp answer ready. I have taken so much trouble and worked so hard to better their position, and now they are ashamed of me! They are shortening my life! My God, do I deserve to be thus treated by my own children? Yes, you have reason for asking that question; you have richly deserved to be ill-treated by your children. It is not so much a curse from God, as a curse that you have brought upon yourself that you are suffering from. You have cut a rod to beat yourself with. Tell me, how have you brought up your children? What have you taught them from their childhood? How have you punished and chastised them when they committed a fault? What sort of example have you given them? If you have failed in any of these points, what wonder is it that your children cannot be induced to join in any devotion, since they were not trained to it from their childhood? What wonder is it that they are disobedient and obstinate towards you; for you have not taught them how to fear and love God! You have taught the little dog to eat from the dish; how, then, can you expect him to go a-hunting? Now you come wailing and lamenting and seeking to mend matters, but it is too late. Try to bend a large oak tree, or tame an old and savage wolf; you will not succeed. You should have taught your children better long ago; and you must only blame yourself for the trouble they now cause you! The Lord says: "What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap."[1] You have, by your want of care, sown weeds, thorns, and thistles in the souls of your children. You cannot now hope to reap good wheat therefrom, but rather thistles and thorns that will pierce your heart with sorrow. You have sown curses and oaths in their still innocent ears; and now they use against you what they learned from you.

[1] Quæ seminaverit homo, hæc et metet.—Gal. vi. 8.

You have, by your bad example, sown in their still innocent eyes vanities and follies; what else can you now expect to reap? "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"[1] asks Jesus Christ. No, that cannot be: "What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap."[2] Whatever grief or trouble your children now cause you, is just what you chose yourself.

Parents justly punished by temporal misfortune, on account of badly training their children.

And this is the just punishment that the hidden judgment of God decrees against you, oh, parents! He chastises you with that wherewith you offended Him. You have offended God by not carefully training up your children, from their earliest years, to fear, obey, and love Him, and now He allows them to refuse you the obedience, respect, and love they owe you. Not that your wicked children are to be excused; by no means. They will have to suffer in this life and in the next; but the divine justice wills that you should, even in this life, share in the punishment merited by your children, since you are the cause of their present perverseness, by neglecting their early training. You see, then, that it depends on you, Christian parents, whether you are to have joy and consolation, or grief and trouble with your children. At all events, you must confess that your own temporal happiness requires that you should rear up your children in the fear and love of God, for their last end. I know well that is a consideration which is very apt to touch your heart, and to induce you to train up your children properly; but if it were the only one, I should not much deplore your misfortune, as long as your eternal salvation was not at stake. That is what should make the greatest impression on you, and induce you to spare no trouble in doing your duty to your children. As I shall show in the

Second Part.

Grievous sin for parents to train their children badly.

In order to be sure of your eternal salvation, you must fulfil all the duties that God has imposed on you, under pain of mortal sin. There is not the least doubt of that: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."[3] But I have already shown you, oh, parents, clearly enough, from the natural and divine law, and from the law of charity towards your children, that you are bound to bring up the latter in the fear and love of God; and I hardly think you can have any doubt of your being obliged to do so. Now, if you consider the matter seriously, you will see that you

[1] Numquid colligunt de spinis uvas, aut de tribulis ficus?—Matth. vii. 16.
[2] Quæ seminaverit homo, hæc et metet.
[3] Si vis ad vitam ingredi, serva mandata.—Matth. xix. 17.

commit a very grievous sin, incur a fearful responsibility before God, and that thus you cannot entertain any reasonable hopes of salvation, if you do not fulfil this duty. To be the deliberate cause of leading into sin immortal souls, for whom the Son of God shed His Blood, and died a shameful death, to betray them into vicious habits, to deliver them up to the devil, to deprive them of Heaven and drag them down to hell, surely that is a terrible sin! It is the sin of which our Lord says in the Gospel: "Woe to that man by whom scandal cometh; it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea."[1] If this is true of all men, even of strangers and foreigners, who are not otherwise at all concerned about your children, because they are not entrusted with the care of them, if they give your children occasion to sin by wicked teaching, by unbecoming conversation, by immodest looks and gestures, or by bad example; nay, if they even do not prevent your children from committing sin, when it is in their power to do so (alas, there are so many scandals, both public and private, in our days!); if, I say, all these people are threatened with eternal woe, and the souls they have betrayed will be required at their hands, how will it be with you, oh, fathers and mothers, if by your evil training, or neglect of giving them good instruction, or, what is still worse, by your wicked instructions and example, you lead astray your own children, who are your own flesh and blood? What will you have to say, if you deliver up to the devil those whom God has entrusted to you, that you may bring them to Him? But their good or evil lives, their piety or wickedness, and consequently their salvation or damnation, depend, generally speaking, as I have often told you, on the training you give them from their early years.

The sins of their children will be imputed to them.

Therefore, the holy Fathers say positively that the sins and misdeeds of children will be imputed by the justice of God to the parents, if the latter have been remiss in their duty, just as if they themselves were guilty. St. Ambrose says: "The evil life of the son will be imputed to the carelessness of the father,[2] the wickedness of the daughter to the negligence of the mother." Such is also the opinion of Origen: "All the faults of children will be imputed to their parents, who neither instructed nor corrected

[1] Væ homini illi, per quem scandalum venit. Expedit ei, ut suspendatur mola asinaria in collo ejus, et demergatur in profundum maris.—Matth. xviii. 6.

[2] Ad negligentiam patrum refertur dissolutio filiorum.

them."[1] Nay, the Catechism of the Council of Trent teaches that such careless parents will be punished, not merely for the sins of the children whom they have badly reared, but also for the sins of their children's children, who will be influenced in turn by the bad training their parents received. Oh, my God, what a fearful reckoning that will be for many parents!

God will inflict fearful punishment on such parents.

And what terrible vengeance the divine justice will take for the loss of so many precious souls, who were ruined through want of proper training! What do you think, fathers and mothers; what would you say if your beloved child was brought by its nurse to a witch or sorcerer, delivered over to be the victim of diabolical arts, and instructed in witchcraft afterwards, so that it could not be induced to repent? Say what you think; what punishment would that nurse deserve? Could you, in your just anger and resentment, think of any punishment that would be sufficient for such a crime? No; the most painful death would not be severe enough. And why so? Because, on the one hand, you love your child tenderly, and on the other, you must see it hopelessly lost and corrupted. I acknowledge that you would, in such a case, have great cause for grief and resentment. But, tell me, is God less concerned in the salvation of your children than you? Does He love them less than you do? You are their father and mother according to the body, but you cannot give them their immortal souls; God alone is their Father according to the soul. You have suckled and fed your children, but you have not given your blood for them, nor have you fed them with your own flesh. You have borne with much inconvenience, discomfort, and trouble on their account, for many years, to support them decently; but you have not suffered cruel bonds, nor scoffs, nor scourges, nor thorns, nor nails, nor spear for them. You have helped to support their temporal existence, but you have not hung on a gibbet for them. Such is the inexpressible love that the almighty God has for your children, so highly does He value them, that He has suffered all this, and other fearful tortures, too, willingly for their sakes, so that they might escape hell, and go to Heaven. Therefore, your children have far more right to say to Him, than to you: "Our Father who art in Heaven."[2] Say again, what you think, oh, parents, but speak this time against yourselves; how do you think God will look upon you, if you, by

[1] Omnia, quæ deliquerint filii, de parentibus requirentur, qui non erudierint, neque corripuerint filios.

[2] Pater noster, qui est in cœlis.—Matth. vi. 9.

culpable negligence in training them, deliver up the souls of your children, whom He loved even unto death, to the devil and to the eternal flames of hell, from which they can never be liberated? Such was the complaint of the Prophet David against the fathers and mothers of Israel: "They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils."[1] Can He who is a jealous God allow such a crime to go unpunished? Are the torments, even of hell, severe enough to punish it as it deserves?

And will require the souls of their children at their hands.

Certainly, if God entrusts your children to the care of teachers and masters who instruct them in the arts and sciences; of confessors who hear them accuse themselves of their sins, and who direct their consciences; of catechists and preachers, who teach them how to avoid sin and how to fear and serve God; of spiritual and temporal authorities, whose first duty it is to see that provision is made for the proper education of children; and if all these people must answer before the judgment seat of God, for the souls of the children entrusted to their care, under the pain of eternal damnation if they are found guilty of negligence, how much more, oh, parents, will not the souls of your children be required at your hands? What sort of a hell awaits you if you are careless in this duty, to which you are bound, not by a political or human law, but by nature itself? Hear what St. John Chrysostom says: "Parents, bring up your children in the discipline and correction of the Lord."[2] As St. Paul commands: "For if we are bound to care for them, as having to render an account for their souls, how much more the parents who brought them forth."[3] How much stricter the obligation of the latter must be, how much greater their responsibility for those to whom they have given life, and whom they have brought up! Woe to you, then, I again repeat. If the just God will require the souls of your children at the hands of strangers, how much more will He not require at your hands!

Heaven will complain against them.

Unhappy parents, what a fate is in store for you! What answer will you make when the great God says to you: I have given you so many sons and daughters, and entrusted them to your fatherly or motherly care, under the strictest obligation of giving them back to Me again. Where are they now? Where is your son, or daughter? I find only some of your children among my chosen sheep; the others are amongst the goats; and yet I ex-

[1] Immolaverunt filios suos et filias suas dæmoniis.—Ps. cv. 37.

[2] Patres, educate filios vestros in disciplina et correptione Domini.

[3] Si enim nos ipsi quoque vigilare jubemur, tanquam pro animabus illorum rationem reddituri, quanto magis ergo pater qui genuit.

pected that they would all serve, fear, and love Me, and be happy with Me forever. It is you who have estranged them from Me, and given them over to the demon! What answer will you make when your heavenly Father says to you: I have given you the title of father, which of right belongs to Me alone; I have given you part of my paternal authority and right over my children, and you have misused my generosity to ruin and destroy them for eternity! And Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will say: I have chosen you as my helpers and co-operators in the eternal salvation of your children, for whom I have shed my precious Blood, and you have sold them to my sworn enemy for a miserable price! God the Holy Ghost will also accuse you, saying: I entrusted those souls to your care, after I had chosen them and consecrated them as my temples; and now, through your negligence, they have become dens of murderers! Mary the Mother of God, will also be there to accuse you: I had already taken your children under my protection in order to bring them to eternal life; but you, by your culpable carelessness, have allowed them to abandon me, and to become the prey of demons! The holy guardian angels will complain of you: We have labored day and night to protect our charges and lead them to eternal happiness, and we found no more bitter opponents, no worse enemies on earth, than you, who should have helped us! All the Saints in Heaven will cry out against you: We hoped and desired that the number of our companions in happiness would be increased by you; and now by your negligence, and the bad training you have given your children, you help to increase the number of the reprobates in hell! What answer will you make to all this, I again ask you; what judgment, what sort of a punishment can you expect?

Many parents will be lost through this sin alone.

Oh, what a fearful number of parents, even of those who have no other grievous sins to answer for, will be lost eternally because they did not bring up their children in a pious and Christian manner! St. Isidore says: "A great number of parents will be lost on this account alone, that they were the cause of the loss of their children."[1] This truth is confirmed by the fact that very little is thought of negligence in this respect, so that hardly any one makes it a case of confession. Thus, through culpable ignorance, many do not confess it, nor repent of it as they ought.

Conclusion and exhor-

Christian parents, who are here present, I hope better things

[1] Magna parentum pars salute destituitur ob hoc ipsum, quod eorum culpa filii fiunt perditi.

ation to parents.

of you. Look upon this duty as the most important one you have to perform. Think every day, as in truth you ought: The greatest obligation that the married state places me under, is to bring up my children piously and with the greatest care, that they may fear and love God. Think: The most important thing for my children is to escape hell and to gain Heaven. If that thought does not influence you, then, at least, you must be moved by remembering that your own welfare is at stake, that there is question of your being happy with your children here in time, and hereafter in eternity. If you do not fulfil your duty, nor repent duly of your negligence, there can be no hope of salvation for you. Think, whenever you look at your little children: Woe to me, if I should ever be the cause of these now innocent souls losing their innocence and burning in hell, and thus make myself a sharer in their damnation, by bringing them up badly! On the other hand, what a consolation and joy it would be for me, if I could stand before the judgment seat of Christ, with my children, and say to my Judge the same words that He said to His heavenly Father: "While I was with them, I kept them in Thy name," as long as they were under my charge. "Those whom Thou gavest me, have I kept; and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition;" who lost himself by his wilful obstinacy. "And now I come to thee."[1] Thou hast given me two, three, four, five, or more children; I have brought them all up to Thy service as well as I could, according to Thy command; not one of them is lost. Behold, they are here with me, and now I give them up into Thy hands; now I come with them into Thy Kingdom! Oh, what a consolation! It is what I wish you all, Christian parents, from my heart. May you and your children be happy together forever. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Qui in se confidebant, tanquam justi.—Luke xviii. 9.
"Who trusted in themselves as just."

How many there are in the world, my dear brethren, who look upon themselves as just, while they are in reality full of secret sin! How many who could say, like the Pharisee in the Gospel, I am not an unjust man, nor a robber, nor a murderer, nor an

[1] Cum essem cum eis, ego servabam eos in nomine tuo. Quos dedisti mihi, custodivi, et nemo ex eis periit, nisi filius perditionis. Nunc autem ad te venio.—John xvii. 12, 13.

adulterer, nor a calumniator, nor a drunkard, etc., because they know they are free from those vices. But at the same time, they are unjust before God, because they neglect, or perform carelessly, certain very important obligations of their state of life! This is especially true of you, married people! Do not be satisfied with merely avoiding certain grievous sins, although you may be otherwise exact in fulfilling the divine law. Do not think that you are faithful servants of God because you go often to confession and communion, frequent the Church, are devout in prayer, hear Mass daily, and never lose the sermon on Sundays and holy-days; or because you are faithful, loving, and kind to each other, and patiently bear trials and adversity. In spite of all this, you will be unjust before God, and deserving of eternal damnation, if you are deliberately guilty of grievous neglect in that most important duty that God has imposed upon you, of training up your children for their last end; that is, to piety, the fear of the Lord and Heaven; for that is required by the natural and the divine law, etc.—*continues as before.*

FORTY-FIRST SERMON.

ON THE TEACHING THAT PARENTS SHOULD GIVE THEIR CHILDREN.

Subject.

1st. Those parents do not train up their children in a Christian manner, who do not teach them what is good. 2d. Much less they who teach them evil. There are many of both kinds. —*Preached on the seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Cujus filius est?—Matth. xxii. 42.
"Whose son is He?"

Introduction.

The question that Christ asked the Pharisee about Himself, is one that people often ask about others nowadays. If we see a child that we do not know, we ask: Whose child is that? What

is his name? Whose son is he? Whose daughter is she? If I were asked: Whose son is that who is so fond of running about the streets, who is so ill-behaved in Church, who is given to cursing and swearing? And if I were asked: Who are the parents of that child who is quiet, modest, reserved, and humble, who comes to Mass every day, who goes to confession and communion so often in the month? Although I might not know either the children or their parents, yet I should guess at once how the parents bring up their children, and should say: The first is the son of a father and mother who do not fulfil their duty; the second is the son of a pious father and mother who look after the souls of their children; for as we have seen already, children, generally speaking, lead a good or a bad life, according as they are well or ill brought up by their parents. Hitherto, my dear brethren, I have spoken in general of the obligations that parents are under to train up their children in a Christian manner; for that is required of parents by the natural and divine law; and I have also shown that the eternal welfare of the children, and the temporal and eternal welfare of the parents, depend thereon. It now remains for me to show how this Christian training is to be given, and what it requires. What is that? Be attentive now. Parents who wish to bring up their children, as they ought for their last end, must have good tongues, sharp eyes, paternal hands, and good habits: tongues to teach their children what is good; eyes, to be watchful over all their actions; hands, to punish them when necessary, in a paternal manner; good habits, so as to give them a good example of virtue and the fear of the Lord. If one of these be wanting, the children will not be trained properly. I shall confine myself to the first to-day, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

Those parents who have not good tongues, do not rear their children properly; because they do not teach their children what is good. Such will be the first and chief part. Much less do those parents rear their children well, who have bad tongues; that is to say, who teach them evil. Such will be the second part.

There are many parents of both kinds; a fact which cannot be sufficiently deplored. That they may amend both those great faults, give Thy grace, oh, God, to all parents, through the in-

tercession of Thy Mother Mary, and all the holy angels guardian.

We are born in ignorance.

Amongst the many miseries that we inherit from the sin of our forefather Adam, is deplorable ignorance in nearly everything. No man is born learned, in the general course of nature. No matter who we are, we bring ignorance with us into the world. It lies with us in the cradle, and remains with us for many years afterwards. Children must be taught and instructed how to speak, read, and write, nay, even how to walk and stand, eat, and drink, although the beasts themselves require no instruction in these latter things. How many years it takes, what great labor and trouble are required, before a teacher can get a child to understand the Latin language alone! But this is not what I am most concerned about. It would not matter much, oh, parents, if your children were and remained ignorant of such things.

Especially in what concerns the business of the soul.

There is another art, and if they remain in ignorance of it, they will never be happy with God in Heaven; that is the art of arts, the chief business, nay, the only business that we must, necessarily, attend to as long as we live; it is the only art that we must know—the art of living and dying in a Christian and holy manner. Now, the most deplorable fact of all is, that this art is the one we are most ignorant of naturally, and we find the greatest difficulty in learning it, on account of our inclination to evil. Hence, in order to acquire a knowledge of it, much more time, trouble, and labor must be expended, than what a mere natural art or science would require. Even after having learned and understood that art, it is the one that we forget most easily, unless we are constantly reminded of and instructed and exercised in it.

So that children must be instructed herein by their parents.

Therefore, if children are to attain to eternal happiness, which is the chief thing for them, they must necessarily be instructed most diligently in this art, from their earliest years, and must be constantly exercised in it, by those on whom the duty of teaching them devolves. And who are they? You, fathers and mothers, have, before all others, received this charge from God: "Teach your children," says the Lord to His people, in the 11th chapter of Deuteronomy, after He had warned them to observe all His commandments faithfully: "that they meditate on them."[1] And you must teach them constantly: "When thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest on the way, and

[1] Docete filios vestros ut illa meditentur.—Deut. xi. 19.

when thou liest down and risest up;"[1] teach your children.[2] What? "What I command you this day, that you love the Lord your God, and serve Him with all your heart."[3] The words of the Wise Ecclesiasticus to parents are: "Hast thou children? instruct them from their childhood."[4] Mind, he does not say: "Enrich them; exalt them; but instruct them."[5] In what? In that of which Eternal Wisdom says: "Come, children, I will teach you the fear of the Lord."[6] What the Apostles were, as teachers of the whole world, what bishops and priests are to those under their charge, that you are, oh, parents, in your families; therefore, St. John Chrysostom calls you Apostles: "You are Apostles in your families, which are called the domestic Church by St. Paul; you preside over them, you instruct them."[7] "The lips of parents are books," he continues, "for the purpose of instructing their children:"[8] and teaching them the law of God.

Not superficially, but thoroughly.

But how, and in what manner, must this instruction be given? What must it treat of principally? That the children know how to make the sign of the Cross, to say the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Creed, as well as the Commandments of God and of the Church, and that they know all the principal parts of the Catechism by heart, seems to be enough for most parents, even for those who wish to live as pious Christians and to fulfil their parental obligations; and would to God that all parents taught their children even that much! But, is this all the instruction that they owe their children? It is part of it, certainly, but not by any means all of it; for what good is it to know the faith by heart, and not to know how to live according to it? Of what use is it to be able to repeat the ten Commandments, and not to know what is commanded or forbidden by them? Nay, what good is it even to understand all this, if the children are not constantly urged to observe the truths they have learned? To be satisfied with the bare knowledge, would be like trying to feed a hungry child by holding out a piece of bread to him so that he could see, but not eat it. If that mode of action were persevered

[1] Quando sederis in domo tua, et ambulaveris in via, et accubueris atque surrexeris.—Deut. xi. 19.

[2] Docete filios vestros.

[3] Quæ ego hodie præcipio vobis, ut diligatis Dominum Deum vestrum, et serviatis ei in toto corde vestro.—Deut. xi. 13.

[4] Filii tibi sunt? erudi illos a pueritia illorum.—Eccl. vii. 25.

[5] Dita illos; extolle illos; sed erudi illos.

[6] Venite filii, timorem Domini docebo vos.—Ps. xxxiii. 12.

[7] Apostoli estis familiæ vestræ; hanc Apostolus vocat Ecclesiam domesticam, huic præsidetis, hanc instruitis.

[8] Libri sunt labia parentum, namque ad erudiendos filios.

in, the child would die of hunger. Let a mother show to her infant son a plate of warm soup, and say: Come, my child, eat; you must eat in order to live. Although the soup is good and healthy food, the child knows nothing of that, nor how to eat it, and therefore the mother herself must begin and taste it, and put it to the child's lips. So it is, also, with the food of the soul: it is not enough merely to present it, or to impress the Christian law and the ten Commandments on children's memories, so that they can repeat them like a parrot; they must see how that food is eaten. That is to say, they must be taught every day, clearly and earnestly, how they are to lead a pious life, according to what they have learned. They must have that food put into their mouths by frequent exhortation, so that they may practise what they have learned when opportunity offers.

Some ways of teaching children principal points of doctrine.

In that way they must be deeply impressed with the last end of their creation. For instance: Listen, my child: the life we lead in this world lasts but a short time, and an uncertain time; we cannot be sure of a single month; we may die to-morrow, or even to-day. Our greatest care should be to live well, so that we may die well. We are not here to be rich, and therefore, they who are rich, are not happy on that account. We are not here to eat and drink, to sleep and play, so that they who enjoy all the pleasures they desire, are not to be looked upon as happy. We are not here to be praised and honored, nor are men happy merely because the world esteems them. We are here solely for the purpose of fearing God, serving Him, keeping His commandments, doing His will in all things, loving Him above all things, and so, after this short life, enjoying Him forever in Heaven. If we do not get there, it were better for us never to have been born. That must be the object of all our desires, to it all our actions must tend, for it we must pray and sing every morning and often during the day. All that I do, think, and say must be for God's sake, and to gain Heaven. They must be taught to have a great esteem for God, above all things, and to hate mortal sin and fear it more than anything else, because the great God is offended by it. Think, my child, you might say: if you were to lose your father and mother, who would take care of you? Who would give you food and clothing? Would you not be badly off? And yet that would be a thousand times better for you, than that you should commit even one mortal sin in your whole life-time, and thereby lose God. If you were struck blind, so that you could not see your father or mother, brother or sister, nor even the light of day, that would be

a great misfortune, would it not? And yet, it would not be near so great an evil, as if you were to offend God. To be spitted alive and roasted, or treated like the holy martyr St. Lawrence; what do you think; would you be able to endure that? And yet it is only a shadow compared with the fire of hell, where the wicked shall burn forever, and never die. And they who sin grievously against the commandments of God, deserve that fire. Therefore, whatever you do, see that you never commit a mortal sin for any one, for any pleasure, or for any gain. But, Christian parents, be careful that your children do not imagine a sin to be where there is none, nor a venial sin to be a mortal one; for sometimes, for the sake of quieting the children, or keeping them away from small sins, or making them devout, the mother, or the servant, will say to them: Be quiet; children who cry so will not go to Heaven; to tell a lie, to talk in Church, or not to be obedient is a mortal sin, and so on. It often happens that the children are afterwards really deceived by such remarks and believe them, and yet commit the sin all the same. They must be taught, from their earliest years, to have a great love for the Christian virtues, especially for humility, modesty, diligence, meekness, patience, and contentment with the will of God in all things. They must be told of, and you must read to them, the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, how obedient He was to His poor parents, as a lowly workman's apprentice, how He was clad modestly and humbly, how poor His food was, and how many years He thus spent on earth, until He died in torments on the cross, in order to show us the way we have to go if we wish to follow Him to Heaven. In that way you will save them from the deceitful spirit of the vain world, and will fill them with the true spirit of Jesus Christ and His Gospel from their tenderest years. They must be taught to have a tender love and devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, and to the holy angels guardian. To that end, along with their daily devotions, you might select a certain day in the week on which you and your children could pay them special honor. To teach your children to be respectful in Church and devout at prayer, you must always make them pray with folded hands before and after meals, and every morning and evening they should kneel down, to pray to God and the Saints. They will learn to be merciful and charitable to the poor, if they are told to bring the alms to any poor person who is begging at the door, and they must be told, at the same time, that what is given to the poor, is given to Christ; go, therefore, my child,

and give this piece of bread, or money, or whatever it is, with as much respect, love, and good-will, as if Christ Himself were standing at the door to take it out of your hand. These exhortations must be often repeated, and so earnestly, that the children will think it an honor worth striving for, to be allowed to bring the alms. The day would be too short for my sermon, my dear brethren, if I were to mention everything that parents should constantly impress upon their children.

After the example of the elder Tobias.

If you wish for examples of parents who have thus trained their children, in order to see how they did it, read those of the Sacred Scriptures; there you will find, amongst many others, the history of Tobias, and how he trained his son: "From his infancy he taught him to fear God, and to abstain from all sin."[1] And how did he instruct him? Read the 4th chapter of the Book of Tobias, and you will see words there which should be constantly on the lips of parents: "Hear, my son, the words of my mouth, and lay them as a foundation in thy heart."[2] "All the days of thy life have God in thy mind; and take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God."[3] "Thou shalt honor thy mother all the days of her life; for thou must be mindful what, and how great perils she suffered for thee."[4] "Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person; for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee."[5] "According to thy ability, be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care, even so, to bestow willingly a little; for thus thou storest up for thyself a good reward for the day of necessity.[6] For alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God, to all them that give it." "Eat thy bread with the hungry and the needy, and with thy garments cover the naked."[7] "Take heed to keep thy-

[1] Quem ab infantia timere Deum docuit, et abstinere ab omni peccato.—Tob. i. 10.

[2] Audi, fili mi, verba oris mei, et ea in corde tuo quasi fundamentum construe.—Ibid. iv. 2.

[3] Omnibus diebus vitæ tuæ in mente habeto Deum; et cave, ne aliquando peccato consentias, et prætermittas præcepta Domini Dei nostri.—Ibid. 6.

[4] Honorem habebis matri tuæ omnibus diebus vitæ ejus; memor enim esse debes, quæ et quanta pericula passa sit propter te.—Ibid. 3, 4.

[5] Ex substantia tua fac eleemosynam, et noli avertere faciem tuam ab ullo paupere; ita enim fiet, ut nec a te avertatur facies Domini.—Ibid. 7.

[6] Quomodo potueris, ita esto misericors; si multum tibi fuerit, abundanter, tribue: si exiguum tibi fuerit, etiam exiguum libenter impertiri stude; præmium enim bonum tibi thesaurizas in die necessitatis.—Ibid. 8–10.

[7] Panem tuum cum esurientibus et egenis comede, et de vestimentis tuis nudos tege. —Ibid. 17.

self, my son, from all fornication, and beside thy wife never endure to know a crime. Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind or in thy words; for from it all perdition took its beginning. If any man hath done any work for thee, immediately pay him his hire, and let not the wages of thy hired servant stay with thee at all. See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another."[1] Keep away from bad company: never eat nor drink with the wicked. "Seek counsel always of a wise man. Bless God at all times, and desire of Him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in Him."[2] "Fear not, my son; we lead, indeed, a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good."[3] Such were the beautiful exhortations and teachings of the pious old man; whereupon, Tobias answered his father and said: "I will do all things, father, which thou hast commanded me."[4] The tears come to my eyes whenever I read or meditate on this chapter. Christian parents, compare with that the teaching you give your children, and see whether they both agree.

The mother of St. Edmund.

Read the Lives of the Saints. There you will see how the mother of St. Edmund, while her son was studying in a foreign land, never sent him clothing without sending also a hair shirt, or some other instrument of penance, with an earnest exhortation to use it diligently, in order to chastise his flesh, keep his innocence and purity untarnished, and preserve his soul free from all sin. Therefore he used to say: "If hell were opened on the one side, and on the other I were compelled to do something that could not be done without sin, I should prefer to go down to hell for all eternity, rather than offend God." Parents, compare your teaching; children, compare your practice with this, and see whether there is any difference between the two.

The holy Queen Blanche.

You may read of Queen Blanche, who daily taught her son Louis a certain lesson, when he asked her blessing in the evening, before retiring to rest (children, it was a king who thus

[1] Attende tibi, fili mi, ab omni fornicatione, et præter uxorem tuam nunquam patiaris crimen scire. Superbiam nunquam in tuo sensu, aut in tuo verbo dominari permittas; in ipsa enim initium sumpsit omnis perditio. Quicunque tibi aliquid operatus fuerit, statim ei mercedem restitue. Quod ab alio oderis fieri tibi, vide, ne tu aliquando alteri facias. —Tob. iv. 13–16.

[2] Consilium semper a sapiente perquire. Omni tempore benedic Deum, et pete ab eo, ut vias tuas dirigat, etc.—Ibid. 19–20.

[3] Noli timere, fili mi: pauperem quidem vitam gerimus; sed multa bona habebimus, si timuerimus Deum et recesserimus ab omni peccato et fecerimus bene.—Ibid. 23.

[4] Omnia quæcunque præcepisti mihi, faciam, pater.—Ibid. v. 1.

acted to his mother, and you are sometimes ashamed to do it): "My son," she said, in an earnest tone, "I love you more than myself; you are the only consolation that I have on earth; you are the hope of the whole country; but I would rather see you lying dead at my feet, than learn that you had committed a deliberate mortal sin." Parents, are you, too, thus disposed?

And her son, St Louis.

But mark how the teaching of pious parents has it effect on their children. Every one knows how carefully Louis followed his mother's instructions, and lived according to them. Nor was he holy for himself alone, but he also left to his descendants the effect of his good example. In his Life, by Lawrence Surius, you may read the beautiful advice he gave to his eldest son Philip. I will give you a short extract from it: "My son," are his words, "above all, see that you love God, for no one can be happy who does not love God. Be careful never to commit a mortal sin, but rather endure all the torments in the world. When trials come, bear them patiently, and think that you have deserved them; you will thus derive great profit from them. When you enjoy prosperity, return humble thanks to God, lest you should become exalted and grow worse through that which should have made you better."[1] "Frequently confess your sins to a pious and learned confessor, who will teach you what to do, and what to avoid, and give him every liberty to tell you of your faults, and to punish you for them."[2] "Hear Mass with great devotion; do not allow your eyes to wander about in Church, much less must you talk, or try to divert yourself; but pray to God with lips and heart. Be kind and compassionate towards the poor and oppressed, and help them as well as you can. Listen with pleasure whenever God and heavenly things are spoken of."[3] "Frequent the company of the good and pious, and avoid that of the wicked. Wherever you are, do not allow anything to be said against God and His Saints, nor against the good name of any one. Often thank God for all the benefits He has bestowed on you, so that you may be worthy of still greater ones. Listen patiently to the complaints of the poor, etc." After many other fervent exhortations to act justly during his reign, to preserve peace, to protect the Church, and to spread the Catholic faith, he concludes with the following words: "May the most

[1] Fili mi, ante omnia diligenter in eam curam incumbe, ut diligas Deum. . . Cave, ne unquam admittas peccatum mortiferum, etc. Cum adversa accidunt, feras æquo animo, etc. Cum rebus prosperis fueris, humiliter agas gratias Deo.

[2] Crebro confitearis peccata tua, etc.

[3] Officium divinum devote auscultes. . . . Animo sis pio et humano erga pauperes. Sermones, qui fiunt de Deo, lubens audi.

Holy Trinity and all the Saints protect you from all evil,' and may God give you the grace always to live in piety and justice and to fulfil His holy will, so that He may be honored by you, and we may meet after this life before Him, to rejoice with Him forever." Christian parents, it was a king who thus taught his children! Happy, indeed, are such families! What a Heaven on earth it is where the parents teach and the children learn such lessons! Blessed are the fathers and mothers who thus do the work of Apostles and co-operators of Jesus Christ, for the glory of God, and the salvation of the children entrusted to their care! Blessed children, how happy you are in being thus inspired with the fear and love of God from your tenderest years! Would that such were the case in every household; what a change there would be for the better, how different life would be throughout Christendom!

Negligence of parents in giving this instruction.

But, alas, there is little use in talking thus! How many there are who are guilty of grievous negligence with regard to teaching and instructing their children! How many households there are, in which there is hardly a word said, the whole week, of God and heavenly things, unless the holy name of God is blasphemed, or uttered irreverently! We ought to be ashamed when we read that even the heathens try to bring up their children well. The philosophers of India, as Father Drexelius writes, were formerly accustomed to forbid their children, or scholars entrusted to their care, to come to table, until they could give the correct answers to a certain number of questions, and had told what each had done during the day that was deserving of praise. If any of the children did not satisfy these conditions, they were sent away from the table hungry. Christians, what is our conduct in this respect? A fine thing, indeed, it would be for parents to keep their sons and daughters fasting until the latter repeated what they remembered of the last good exhortation they received, or the last sermon or lesson in catechism they heard! A fine thing, indeed, for all masters and mistresses to assemble their children and servants together on Sundays and holy-days, to read a spiritual book for them, or to teach them something for the good of their souls! That would be contrary to all rules of state and policy; that work is suited only for school-masters and preachers! But tell me, is it not also the school-master's business to teach your children foreign languages, writing, drawing, and other studies, in which you make their whole education consist? And yet you often examine

[1] Sacrosancta Trinitas, et sancti omnes servent te ab omni malo.

them in those things yourselves, to see what progress they are making. They are often obliged to exhibit their proficiency in your presence and before others also. Are those things, then, of more importance than their eternal salvation? But, no more of this; for there is still another thing to be considered that is much more to be deplored, and that is, that if some parents neglect their duty, and are on that account to be condemned because they do not use their tongues to instruct their children, how much more are not they to be condemned, who, instead of giving good instruction, teach their children wickedness by their evil tongues, and lead them into sin? Yet, alas, there is a large number of such people in the world, as we shall briefly see in the

Second Part.

Many teach their children evil.

You are frightened, no doubt, Christian hearers, at this subject, and you think it almost an impossibility that amongst Catholic Christians, parents are to be found who deliberately and wilfully teach wickedness to their sons and daughters; for that would be to make one's house into a school for the devil, to the eternal ruin of souls. And yet, I repeat, how many there are who set up such a school of perdition in their own houses, so that the devil finds no better teachers and agents in the world, than many fathers and mothers, whom they make use of to betray innocent children! It would, in truth, be much better for many sons and daughters that they had never been born, or never been brought up by their parents, or that they had been abandoned in the streets to the fate of illegitimate children, and had been reared in a foundling asylum. Better for them, if, after baptism, they had been put, like Moses, into a basket and been left to the mercy of the winds and waves, or that they had been suckled by wolves in a forest, like Romulus and Remus, or had even been devoured by wild beasts. Better, I say, to lose their lives at once, than to live and learn sin and wickedness from their parents! St. John Chrysostom says: Would to God that the worst was[1] that your children, oh, parents, learned nothing from you, although you should answer to God for it: yet it could be tolerated to a certain extent. But you do worse than that by teaching them what is directly opposed to their salvation![2] Let us see, now, if this is the case.

Many teach them max-

I will not speak here of those undoubted agents of the devil

[1] Utinam hoc tantum culpa esset.

[2] Ita universa illos jubetis facere, quæ si faciunt, salvi esse non possunt.

ims opposed t· Christian truth.

who teach their children to lie and cheat, to work on Sundays and holy-days, to eat meat on forbidden days, to steal, to curse, to be immoral, and to have dealings with the devil (I shudder when I think of it); I could not suspect decent parents of being guilty of such things. Yet there are such people in the world. My complaint shall now be directed principally against those who inspire their children with the false and lying maxims of a corrupt and perverse world, which are altogether opposed to the Christian religion, and to the life and example of Jesus Christ, whom we must try to imitate, and to the maxims of the Gospel that we must observe, if we wish to gain eternal happiness. For instance, Christ, by His example, and in His Gospel, that all parents should teach their children from their tenderest years, says that the poor in spirit are blessed;[1] and condemns the greed of gold: "Woe to you that are rich;"[2] to you who set your hearts on riches. Now, some parents daily teach their children the contrary of that, and tell them that happiness consists in being very wealthy. See, they say, that gentleman, that merchant, how well he has got on in a short time, by his industry. What a beautiful house he has! What a rich inheritance he has succeeded to! He is certainly fortunate. How well that son, that daughter, is married! What would you think, my child, if such good luck fell to your share? Such teaching as that makes a very strong impression on tender minds, so that they afterwards come to look upon money and riches almost as their God. Christ says in the Gospel: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart."[3] "Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."[4] If you are invited by any one, "sit down in the lowest place."[5] But what do parents say? My son, my daughter, you are as good as such and such a one. You must not give way to them, nor yield to them; you are superior to them in rank and position. "But I say to you," says Christ in the Gospel, "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you."[6] What do parents say when their children suffer anything from another? My child, will you put up with that? Can you not defend yourself? Will you let yourself be treated in that way? Many fathers are quite pleased to see their sons fight-

[1] Beati pauperes spiritu.—Matth. v. 3. [2] Væ vobis divitibus.—Luke vi. 24.

[3] Discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde.—Matth. xi. 29.

[4] Amen, dico vobis, nisi conversi fueritis, et efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum cœlorum.—Ibid. xviii. 3.

[5] Recumbe in novissimo loco.—Luke xiv. 10.

[6] Ego autem dico vobis, diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his, qui oderunt vos.—Matth. v. 44.

ng. If they are victorious the fathers even praise them, and say: The young fellow has courage, he will turn out well some day! Of course he will turn out well; but wait! If a little child cries because it cannot have what it wants, the parents give it a stick and tell it to beat and scold the naughty person who has made it cross. A very good way, indeed, to give them a vindictive spirit.

How do mothers sometimes instruct their daughters, who would otherwise willingly be pious and devout? Is it according to the teaching of Christ in the Gospel: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world"?[1] Is it according to the teaching of St. Paul, who condemns all superfluous, and much more, all vain and scandalous luxury in dress, and who even tells women to veil their faces on account of the angels? No, indeed; quite the contrary. Go to your father, they say, and tell him you want another dress; you ought to be ashamed to appear like that in the streets. What will people think when they see their own children better dressed than you? Sometimes the daughters say to their mothers: I have heard in the sermon that it is not right to dress in that way, or to follow that fashion, and that it might give scandal, etc. What, says the mother, let preachers say what they like. They do not understand these things, nor how people must live in the world. Everything they say is not Gospel. We must not mind them, but do as others do. Other pious people do the same, and we do not want to be any better than they! You must be dressed as I wish. All right; be it so; and they will go also where you, and not God, wish them to go. There are daughters who, through natural bashfulness, or through a love of virginal purity, wish to remain quietly at home, to avoid the society of the other sex, and to occupy themselves in some lawful manner, and the mothers, who ought to strengthen them in that good resolution and approve of their modesty, cannot bear it, and drag them about into all sorts of company. What, they say, you must not be bashful, but friendly with people. You must learn how to go about and let yourself be seen; otherwise, who will have you? Thus their innocent souls, even without their own knowledge and consent, since they would willingly go to Heaven by the narrow way of the cross, are filled with the love of idleness and vanity, and are led astray on the broad road, by those who should lead them to humility, modesty, virtue, and Heaven.

Especially mothers with their daughters.

I have seen little girls, I do not say where, who were taught

As experience teaches.

[1] Nolite diligere mundum, neque ea, quæ in mundo sunt.—I. John ii. 15.

by their parents to dance, the one like a peasant man, the other like a peasant woman, and to go through all the motions and figures that peasants practise in their dances at rural merry-makings. It must have taken a deal of time and trouble to teach them all that. When I saw it, I could not help sighing to myself, and saying: What a wretched lesson for their immortal souls! I saw the father and mother laughing and enjoying the scene, when their little children sang impure love songs, or repeated conversations of the same character. They even ordered the children to begin again, so as to prolong their pleasure. Alas, what a training for Christian children! I have seen parents who, when they were playing cards, brought their little children with them, and taught them how to play also. Alas, what training for Christian children! There are parents, too, who cannot bear to see their children piously inclined. They cry down piety in every way possible. See, they say, what a devotee we have! That boy will be good for nothing; he is too pious; we shall not know what to make of him; he is only fit for a priest, etc. These are the fine lessons that many parents give their children nowadays! What wonder is it that the latter, reared in such a school, grow up to be vain and foolish? Wicked parents, for whom do you bring up your children? For God, or for the world, that they have formally renounced in baptism? For God, or for the devil, whom they have also renounced forever? Have you had them baptized that they might serve under the standard of Jesus Christ, or under that of the demon? Has God entrusted them to you, that you might lead them astray, since you lead them in that unchristian manner on the high road to hell? You are, as St. Bernard says, "betrayers of your children!"[1]

Exhortation to parents to instruct their children themselves.

Ah, Christian parents, is my conclusion in the oft-quoted words of the Lord: "Teach your children,"[2] from their childhood. And what? "To love the Lord their God,"[3] that they may serve Him alone with all their hearts. If you know not how, or cannot undertake to perform the office of a Christian teacher, and instruct your children in goodness, then send them, at least, and see that they go to where they will get proper instruction from others. Bring them with you to sermons, although they may be still very young; they will hear many salutary things that will be for the advantage of their souls their whole lives long. They will at least have a wish to hear the Word of God, from their tenderest years, and that is a sign of predestination. And you, too, will learn

[1] Seductores filiorum! [2] Docete filios vestros. [3] Ut diligant Dominum Deum.

much that you can afterwards teach your children. If you do not do even that much (and alas, there are many who hardly go to a sermon once in a quarter of a year, through indolence and laziness, or through fear of being disturbed in conscience!), what wonder is it that you and your children live and die in culpable ignorance of what concerns your eternal welfare? What wonder is it that you live a sensual life, according to the fashion of the world?

Or to get others to instruct them, in which they are wanting also.

You must send your children every Sunday to catechism. If the mother is not able to nurse her child, does she neglect it altogether? No, for she would thus cause the child's death; she hires some one who can take care of it in her place. In the same way, if some parents do not know how to instruct their children, they must not, therefore, allow the souls of the latter to perish. If they did so, they would be murderers in a spiritual sense; and therefore they must have recourse to others, who will teach their children for them. Alas, what great negligence parents are often guilty of in this respect too! So that ecclesiastical superiors must often compel them, by penalties, to send their children to catechism. Good God, what are things coming to, in the Christian world? Who ever heard that a magistrate had to compel people to look after their cows, and sheep, and pigs, and goats? But the souls of poor children are left without any one to attend to them! It was that thought which so often drew tears from St. John Chrysostom. He says: "We take more care of our asses and horses, than of the souls of our children."[1] Certainly, what the Emperor Augustus used to say of Herod: "It is better to be Herod's pig, than his child," might be affirmed of many Christians. There are many people who treat their swine better than they treat their children. Listen, parents: If you yourselves do not teach your children the catechism, nor send them to others to learn it, you cannot hope to save your souls, unless you repent sincerely of your negligence. Understand me, now; I do not say that you commit a grievous sin by keeping them away from catechism now and then; but if you are guilty of grievous carelessness herein, you cannot be excused from mortal sin, as the best theologians teach.

Conclusion.

Therefore, "teach your children,"[2] or at least see that they are taught by others. Think often, for your consolation, that there is no work more holy, nor more divine, than to co-operate in the salvation of souls. You can daily practise zeal for souls,

[1] Majorem asinorum et equorum quam filiorum curam habemus. [2] Docete filios vestros.

and for souls that are most closely connected with you. Spare neither care nor labor herein! You could not find a better employment. Rejoice at the promise made by God: "They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars to all eternity."[3] Amen.

Another Introduction for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Loquebatur recte.—Mark vii. 35.
"He spoke right."

To speak, and to speak always right, as we should, is a great and a rare art. It is an art that I desire for myself and for all men, but especially for parents, since it is so very necessary for the Christian training of children. Hitherto, my dear brethren, I have treated of this subject in general, and shown how all parents are bound by the natural and divine law to train their children, and how the eternal salvation of their children, and their own temporal and eternal welfare, should incite parents to perform this duty. It now remains for me to tell you how this training is to be given, and what it requires. What is that? Be attentive: Parents who wish to bring up their children for their last end, must speak, see, feel, and live right. They must speak right, to instruct their children in what is good; see right, to be watchful over them; feel right, to punish and to chastise them when necessary; live right, to give them a good example. If one of them be wanting, the children will not be trained properly. I confine myself to the first to-day, and I say: Parents who do not speak right, that is, who do not teach their children what is good, do not train them in a Christian manner. The first part. Much less do those parents who speak evil, that is, who teach their children what is evil, bring them up properly. The second part, etc.—*continues as before.*

[3] Qui ad justitiam erudiunt multos, fulgebunt quasi stellæ in perpetuas æternitates.—Dan. xii. 3.

FORTY-SECOND SERMON.

ON THE WATCHFULNESS OF PARENTS OVER THEIR CHILDREN.

Subject.

Parents who wish to bring up their children for Heaven, in a Christian manner, and to keep them from sin, must be watchful over all their actions.—*Preached on the eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Confide, fili, remittuntur tibi peccata tua.—Matth. ix. 2.
"Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee."

Introduction.

Christ could speak like that; for no one but God can forgive sin, except those to whom He has given that power. Christian parents, God has given you great power over your sons and daughters! But He has not empowered you to forgive them their sins. Oh, if you had that power! If you could say, whenever your children are guilty of sin: "Be of good heart, son," or daughter, "thy sins are forgiven thee,"[1] it would be easy for you, then, to bring up your children to Heaven. But what am I saying? You can bestow on them a still greater benefit than the forgiveness of their sins. What benefit is that? You can, if you manage matters properly, prevent your children from committing any grievous sin, so that they do not need forgiveness; and that depends upon your giving them a Christian training. We have treated, last Sunday, of the good tongue, that is, the good instruction that is necessary to a Christian training. But that alone is not enough: you must also have sharp eyes, so as to watch carefully over all their actions, as I shall show in to-day's instruction.

Plan of Discourse.

Parents who wish to bring up their children for Heaven, in a Christian manner, and to keep them from sin, as they ought,

[1] Confide, fili, remittuntur tibi peccata tua.

must be watchful over all their actions. That is the whole subject.

Virgin Mother Mary, and you holy angels, who always watch over our salvation, cast your gracious eyes on all parents, and obtain for them, from God, the grace of this necessary vigilance!

A schoolmaster must keep his scholars quiet by his vigilance.

When the cat is away, the mice may play, as the saying is. When children see that no one is looking after them, they do what they like, and are generally wild and naughty. We can see that in a school, where a lot of little boys are sitting together. As long as the teacher is there, and looking about him, they are all as quiet and diligent as possible. There is not a word to be heard, unless when they are repeating their lessons, or arguing with each other. But if the teacher turns his back for a moment, some, who think he does not see them, begin to whisper and talk together; and if he goes out of the school altogether, and they know that he is wanted outside, what a noise they make then! A swarm of bees is not half so lively as a lot of children when left to themselves. They talk, laugh, shout, cry out, fight, and jump over the benches as if they wished to knock down the house, as they experience who have schools in their houses, if the teacher is absent, or wanting in vigilance. To prevent that, teachers generally appoint some one, when they are obliged to be absent, to keep order in the school, and write down the names of those who make a noise. But that is often of little use, for he who has charge of the children is frequently as bad as they are. Or else the children determine, at all costs, to take advantage of the teacher's absence, although they run the risk of punishment on his return. Nor is it any wonder: for they are children, and act as such. There is nothing to keep them quiet but the sharp eye and unceasing vigilance of a teacher who loves them as his scholars.

So also parents must act with regard to the moral character of their children.

My dear brethren, a Christian household in which there are little boys and girls is nothing but a school, over which the father and mother are placed by God as teachers to instruct their children in the Christian faith, and to bring them up to virtue, piety, and the fear of the Lord, that they may live well and die happily, as we have seen in the last sermon. Now, if parents fulfil this duty and often teach and exhort their children to good, they do a great work, that is unfortunately rarely done nowadays, even by Christians. But what good is it all, if they do not continually watch their children, to see if their instructions are followed? Not a bit,

or, at most, very little. If the children find out that they can go where they like, out of sight of their parents; that they can go with whom they like, and do what pleases them best, what will become of their conduct, then? They will be like the scholars who are left alone by their teacher. Sometimes the eldest son or daughter is told to look after the little ones, to keep them out of mischief; or the latter are intrusted to the care of servants. But that is of little use, nor do the children pay any heed to it. It is only their father and mother, whose authority is from God, who can keep them in order; and therefore God has inspired children with a natural respect for their parents.

No teaching is of any good without this vigilance. Proved from Scripture.

No child is so naughty and disobedient as not to be afraid of doing anything unlawful before its father or mother, unless it is neglected and trained to evil from its infancy. No child is so good, modest, and inclined to virtue, as not to be guilty of a few pranks now and then, when its parents are not looking. When did the Prodigal Son of the Gospel begin to drink, and gamble away his money, and live riotously? Was it not when he went to a foreign land, away from under his father's eye? For he certainly would not otherwise have dared to lead such a wicked life. When did Absalom, the eternally unhappy son of a holy father, who was a man after God's own heart, begin to rebel against his father and to seduce the subjects of the latter from their allegiance? Was it not when he was forbidden, for having murdered his brother, to look on his father's face, or to appear in his sight? Moses was placed by God over the people of Israel, as their leader and law-giver. He gave them many pious exhortations to be always faithful to God, and yet when he went away from them for a short time to the mountain, how did they act? The Sacred Scripture says: "And the people, seeing that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, gathering together against Aaron, said: Arise, make us gods, that may go before us."[1] Nor did they stop until they had brought him all their golden earrings, out of which he made a golden calf, and set it up for them to adore, and to offer sacrifice to. "And the people sat down to eat, and drink, and they rose up to play."[2] My God, what an extraordinary thing! Old and sensible people, who had preserved their fidelity to the true God, in the midst of the persecutions of Egypt; that chosen people, who had seen so many wonders of the divine goodness always accompanying them in their journeys,

[1] Videns autem populus, quod moram faceret descendendi de monte Moyses, congregatus adversus Aaron, dixit: Surge, fac nobis deos, qui nos præcedant.—Exod. xxxii. 1.

[2] Et sedit populus manducare, et bibere, et surrexerunt ludere.—Ibid. vi.

now abandoned the true God, because their leader and law-giver was away from them for a short time! What may we not, then, expect of children, who are unable to govern themselves on account of their youth; who do not yet feel much desire for a supernatural end or motive, and who are inclined to all sorts of distractions and amusements, when they are left to themselves by their leaders and guides, their fathers and mothers? What must become of them if they fall into the hands of wicked, ill-reared children, from whom they can learn nothing good, and by whom they will be led into sin, if the vigilance of their parents does not save them? Alas, that would be as bad as to allow a flock of sheep to wander about in the vicinity of the wolf, without a shepherd!

What parents must be watchful of.

Therefore, for a Christian training to be given in the proper way, it is absolutely necessary that parents should keep a watchful eye on all the actions of their children, so as to see how they live and what they do; what evil they commit; what good they do; whether they fear and love God; whether they go to Mass every day; whether, and how often, they go to confession and communion; whether they attend sermons and catechism; when they go to bed, and when they get up; whether they say their morning and evening prayers devoutly; when, where, with whom they go out; what they learn from their teacher; whether they can hear, see, or learn anything good or evil from the servants in the house; how the relatives of the family, and the neighbors act, with regard to them, when they are allowed to visit them; whether the children with whom they play are well or ill-reared, what books they read, etc. Every care must be taken to keep them constantly occupied in some lawful manner. They must never be allowed to remain idle, for that would give the devil every opportunity of leading them into all kinds of sin and vice. They must be carefully kept away from dangerous company, and even from the least occasion of sin. Without this care and watchfulness, all your teaching and exhorting will be of no avail.

After the example of pious parents in the Old Law.

This was the principal thing with all pious, God-fearing parents, who wished to bring up their children for Heaven. When Sara saw her son Isaac playing only once with Ishmael, the son of her handmaid, she could not rest until the latter and her son were turned out of the house. She said to her husband Abraham: "Cast out this bond-woman, and her son."[1] She was afraid

[1] Ejice ancillam hanc, et filium ejus.—Gen. xxi. 10.

that he might corrupt the innocent Isaac. The Patriarch Jacob, too, was ill at ease when his sons, although they were grown up, were away from him, minding their flocks. His father's heart was filled with anxiety to know what they were doing, and how they were getting on. Therefore, he used to send his beloved son Joseph to them: "Go," he said, "and see if all things be well with thy brethren; and bring me word again what is doing."[1] The same anxiety troubled Isai, when his sons were absent from him, and therefore he sent David to see, not merely what they were doing, but in what company they were, as we read in the 17th chapter of the First Book of Kings: "Go see thy brethren, if they are well, and learn with whom they are placed."[2] The Sacred Scripture says of the God-fearing Job, that he was not satisfied with knowing merely what his children did, but also that he was anxious about what they thought, although God alone could know that; and therefore, "rising up early, he offered holocausts for every one of them. For he said: Lest perhaps my sons have sinned, and have blessed God in their hearts."[3] The meaning of that is, according to the Septuagint: "Lest perhaps my sons have thought something wicked against God in their hearts."[4] "So did Job all days."[5] Therefore, careful parents, like Job, are not content with knowing what their children do outwardly, they also try to find out their inward acts. They note, not merely what they say, but also, as far as possible, what they think. They try to find out where their evil inclinations tend, so that they may provide a timely remedy for them. Much may be learned of their thoughts by watching their looks and actions, and, as with other men, a little thing is enough to give cause for suspecting them of evil inclinations.

Many parents fail herein, by busying themselves about other things and paying little attention to their children.

But it is easy to talk of being anxious about the thoughts and desires of children! If parents only kept their eyes open to the outward acts of their children, it would be something. What a great want there is in this respect, with most parents! Some are occupied with far different things the whole day, either at home or elsewhere. The last thing that troubles them is to look after the children. They are very curious about what is going on in town, or in the country, or in the homes of

[1] Vade, et vide si cuncta prospera sint erga fratres tuos; et renuntia mihi quid agatur.—Gen. xxxvii. 14.

[2] Fratres tuos visitabis, si recte agant, et cum quibus ordinati sunt, disce.—I. Kings xvii. 18.

[3] Consurgens diluculo offerebat holocausta pro singulis. Dicebat enim, ne forte peccaverint filii mei, et benedixerint Deo in cordibus suis.—Job i. 5.

[4] Ne forte filii mei in mente sua cogitaverint mala erga Deum.

[5] Sic faciebat Job cunctis diebus.

other people. They pay no attention to what occurs in their own homes, or to what their sons and daughters are doing. Sometimes they do not see their children for the whole day, unless at meals. They allow them to go out when they please, to stand talking in the streets, or at the door, in the morning, the evening, or even at night, with whom they like. How can that have a good effect on young people? Is that the way to watch over the actions of children, when they are allowed to run through the streets as they like, boys and girls together, Christians and Jews, playing, shouting, fighting with each other in full liberty? Is it not the case? I have myself seen, with much bitterness of heart, girls of ten, eleven, and twelve years of age, of decent families, playing with very wild and naughty boys in the public streets. And decent Christian parents think they can bring up their children properly in that way! Is that the way to exercise parental vigilance, when sometimes all the neighbors can speak of the wilfulness, wickedness, and vices of certain children, while the fathers and mothers know nothing at all about them? So little do they watch over their children! Alas, unhappy children, whose father and mother think as little of you as a runaway dog! Nay, would that they thought even as much of you! Sometimes a gentleman loses his hunting-dog, or a lady her lap-dog; the servants are then immediately sent out to look for it, and bring it home so that it may not run away altogether, or be seized upon by strangers. While the son and daughter may run off wherever they like, and stop away half the day, and no one ever thinks of looking for them! People are anxious enough to know if the sheep and cows have come home at the proper time in the evening, from the pasturage; but they trouble themselves very little to know whether their sons and daughters are at home early in the evening.

The heathens were more careful herein.

Ah, if that philosopher, of whom Plutarch writes in his book on the Instruction of Children, were to rise from the dead, and to stand on the top of the highest tower of the town, and cry out: "Where are you going to, citizens? You spend all your time and care in business, and little or none on your children, to whom you must leave your wealth."[1] In the same way I should like to cry out in the ears of those careless parents: You fathers and mothers, where are you going? What is your business now? I am going to a lawyer, one of them might answer, about

[1] Quo tenditis, cives? quo tenditis? Qui rei faciendæ omne impenditis studium, filiis vero instituendis, quibus opes vestras relinquetis exiguum ac plane nullum.

a case I have on hand; I am going to a debtor of mine, to get some money; to a merchant, to do business with him; to the market, to buy some things I want in the house; to my cousin, or neighbor, to pay a visit, or to pass the time. And where are your children meanwhile? Are they well looked after, under the care of a good and pious teacher? If so, then go, in God's name, and do your business, as well as you can! But, during the time that you cannot look after them, are they idle at home, or running about the streets with wicked children, or are they in company from which they can learn nothing good? Oh, if so, go back at once! Go back, hard-hearted parents; your children are of more importance to you than anything else. Your first care must be their eternal salvation; when you have looked after that, you may attend to other things. For what purpose do you intend the money that you lay up, with such labor and trouble? Is it not to support your children? But what a folly it is to neglect and forget those very children whose bodies you labor so much for! As St. John Chrysostom says, that would be like a foolish gardener, who would work outside the garden to bring in the water, so as to water his plants and trees, while he hardly ever looks after the plants themselves, or cares whether the trees grow straight or crooked, whether they bring forth good or bad fruit. Go back, parents; look after your children better! But there is no use in talking that way to those who do not wish to hear!

Others do not care what sort of teachers and servants they intrust their children to.

But if there are some parents who keep their sons and daughters at home, and do not allow them to run about at will, nor to go into bad company, yet, these very parents may be guilty of great and deplorable carelessness of another kind, by not caring what sort of servants they have, although the children are with the servants the whole day. If the latter are faithful to their duties in the house, diligent and obedient, that is all the parents care about. They never trouble themselves about how the servants talk and act with the children, and what example they give them. In the same way parents are guilty of sin by not caring whether the school-master, or drawing, dancing, or fencing master, or others who have to instruct the children, are pious or not; whether their moral character is good or bad. It is enough, as they say, to be able to get the children out of the way for a while. Alas, I must again say with St. John Chrysostom, we select the best shepherd we can find to look after our sheep and cows; but it does not matter to what master or mistress we intrust the

immortal souls of our children, that they may be kept from evil and be trained to virtue.

And allow them to associate with the opposite sex.

Most especially do those parents sin in this respect, who allow their children, and particularly their grown-up daughters, to have free intercourse with persons of the opposite sex, although it may be in their own houses, and under the pretext of securing a suitable match, or of close relationship; and also they who permit their engaged children to be alone with the person they are about to marry. Alas, when I think of this abuse, I could weep bitter tears with the Prophet: "Who will give me a fountain of tears," [1] to weep for the countless, precious souls who are thus sullied and defiled! My God! To leave two people of opposite sexes alone; two who love each other foolishly; two who know that they will soon be married! Who will give me tears enough to bewail the countless sins that are committed in such circumstances by impure desires, looks, and actions! How many lose their virtue thereby, before their marriage! How can there be luck or grace in a marriage that is begun by offending God? Careless parents, what answer will you give hereafter to your just Judge, if you deliberately, or through carelessness, allow your children to act thus, and make yourselves responsible for the sins they commit; and if they do not commit sin, which would indeed be a wonderful thing, you leave them, at least, in the proximate danger of it? Yet so many fathers and mothers think so little of it, that these sins are hardly ever mentioned in confession, and never repented of and atoned for!

They send their children to foreign countries, where they become perverted.

Further, what sort of care do those parents take of their children, who not only allow them to do what they like at home, and to go out walking and talking when and with whom they please; but even place them beyond their reach, in such a way that they could not watch over them, even if they wished to do so? I allude to those who, without any necessity or grievous cause, send their sons, and especially their daughters, to foreign lands, to learn a useless language, that they could perhaps have learned at home just as well; or to be instructed in the fine arts, which they have as good, if not better, opportunities of learning in their own country, or to learn the ways of the world, which will be of more harm than good to their souls, their whole lives long. I do not say, my dear brethren, that this is to be always condemned, provided the son is in a boarding-house, or the daughter in a convent, where the parents can be certain they

[1] Quis dabit mihi fontem lachrymarum?—Jerem. ix. 1.

will be as well looked after as if they were at home; but few concern themselves about that, and therefore their children bring back from foreign countries nothing else than that they can say: I have been in such and such a town; I have seen this, that, and the other thing. What do I say? Nothing else! Would that it were no worse! They bring back, often, nothing but unchristian and frivolous manners, sinful consciences, and perverse and corrupted lives. Would to God that this were not proved by experience! I ask you, oh, parents, to give testimony to this. Must not some of you acknowledge in your hearts that if you have been guilty of sins in your youth, you learned and committed the most of them when you were out of your parents' sight? And now, children must learn how to lose their souls, in order to be able to speak a foreign language, and put on the vain, frivolous, and wicked manners of the world, in order to complete their education! Fathers and mothers, you must give an account to your Judge, for thus driving your children away from you into the occasion of sin!

Many lay snares for their own children.

Finally, what must I say and think of those parents who are not only careless in watching over their children, so as to keep them from sin and its dangers, but actually lay snares for them at home and elsewhere, and lead them into the occasions of sin? What a fearful thing! Many fathers go to the tavern, their sons must go with them; mothers go into company and bring their daughters with them, into places which ought to be shunned by young people who wish to preserve their innocence. They have pictures in their houses, and statues in their gardens, that no man or woman, not to speak of curious children, could look at without being scandalized. They allow their little boys and girls to occupy the same bed. They are not at all cautious of what they say in their presence, and are very remiss in teaching them Christian modesty. Thus the poor children learn wickedness in their very tenderest years. Christian parents, poverty does not excuse you from the duty of seeing that your children are never placed in the occasion of violating modesty. But, you say, what danger is there? They are young and innocent, and do not know anything of vice. Be careful, or they will learn it much quicker than the Our Father, or the Creed. Are they still innocent? Then keep them so; but they will not long remain so, unless you are very careful. The philosopher Aristotle says that children begin to dream in their fourth or fifth year; I go a little farther, and say that they begin to hear and see in

their fourth or fifth year, or even earlier. And although they cannot sin, because they have not the use of reason, yet many sins can be caused in after life, by what they hear and see in their childhood. If we were to ask many of the perverse, corrupt youths of our times what Jesus Christ asked the father in the Gospel: How long is your son in this miserable state? They could answer, as that father did: "From infancy."[1] How long have you been so wicked? From infancy. When did you learn to commit that sin? From my very childhood. I learned it from my parents, from my brothers and sisters at home. And such is indeed the case.

Conclusion, and exhortation to parents to be watchful over their children.

Christian parents, be watchful over the actions of your children, from their very infancy, if you wish to preserve them from sin, and to keep them in the fear of God. If you had a hundred eyes, you should keep them all open for this purpose; but you have only two, and therefore must be all the more careful. You should inspire yourselves with a holy fear, by thinking: I must one day stand before my Judge to answer for the sins of my children, if I have been the cause of them by a want of vigilance. Nor must you imagine that this is too unjust or severe towards you, for you judge in the same way of others. If your watch goes wrong, you accuse the watchmaker, and say that he does not know his business. If you see a child with a distorted foot, you get indignant, and think that if the mother or the nurse had been more careful, the foot would have been all right. And in the same way the divine Judge will say, when He sees a son or a daughter living in an unchristian manner: Father and mother, what have you been doing? Why have you allowed the unfortunate children to be thus perverted? And what answer will you make to Him? You may say: I have not perverted them, they have done it themselves. I could not prevent them from leading wicked lives. But the Judge will answer: You should have been more watchful over them in their youth. I look upon you as the first cause of their destruction. And such is really the case, Christians! You have, for instance, a clerk in your shop, to whom you give a yearly salary on condition that he looks after your goods, and takes care of them. Now, suppose that, while you are absent, the clerk goes to sleep, and a thief comes in and steals your things; what would you say in that case to the clerk? Unfaithful servant, you would cry out, full of anger, you must either make good the loss or go to prison. But why? What has

[1] Ab infantia.—Mark ix. 20.

the poor man done ? He went to sleep when he should have remained awake. But, there is no harm in that ; when a man is asleep, he can do no evil. But he should have kept his eyes open, and not have allowed my things to be stolen. He is the cause of the loss I have suffered ; he must go to prison ! You are quite right ; for, according to every law, he who has charge of anything, is responsible for injuries that happen to it, through his negligence. Fathers and mothers, the most precious treasures you have are the immortal souls of your children, whom God has confided to your care with the promise of eternal happiness, if you are faithful in your duty. But if you go to sleep, and do not watch over your children, so that the devil comes and steals one of them away, then, woe to you when you appear before God ! How can you make good that irreparable loss ? Do not say: What have I done ? I have not taught my children anything bad, nor given them bad example, and I have often exhorted them to fear God. That may be ; but you have slept when you should have been awake. You were wanting in vigilance and so your son or daughter is lost. I will require their souls at your hands, the Judge will say to you. Think, too, for your consolation, how much you may do for the honor and glory of God, if by your watchfulness you can save your children even from one mortal sin, and how much you can do for the salvation of souls, if you bring them, by your diligence, to Heaven, along with yourselves. What a pleasing and joyful sight it will be for you on that day when St. Peter will appear with the thousands of Jews that he converted, St. Paul with the countless multitudes of heathens that he gained over to Christ, and the other Apostles, and missionaries, preachers, confessors, and priests, with all the souls that they instructed and led to Heaven ! Ah, parents, do what you can now, so as to be able to take your place amongst them, with your children at your side, and to say to your Judge : Behold, I have kept those souls, and saved them by my watchfulness ! With what joy and gladness you will then hear the happy words : "Well done, good and faithful servant ;" thou faithful father ; thou good mother ! "Because thou hast been faithful over a few things," in being watchful over a few souls, "I will place thee over many things," come "enter," with thy children "into the joy of thy Lord."[1] Amen.

[1] Euge, serve bone et fidelis, quia super pauca fuisti fidelis, super multa te constituam: intra in gaudiam Domini tui.—Matth. xxv. 23.

Another Introduction for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Beati oculi qui vident quæ vos videtis.—Luke x. 23.

"Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see."

Blessed are the tongues of parents who speak right, and as they should; that is, who instruct their children, from childhood, in good and heavenly things! And this is the first requisite to a Christian training, as we have seen in the last sermon. "Blessed are the eyes"[1] of parents, who also see well, as they ought to see; that is, who are always watchful over the actions of their children! And that is the second requisite to a Christian training. Such, without further prelude, is the whole subject of to-day's instruction—*continues as before.*

FORTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON THE DUE CHASTISEMENT OF CHILDREN.

Subject.

1st. Parents, who wish to bring up their children in a Christian manner, must chastise them in a parental way, when necessary. 2d. Many parents are guilty of grievous neglect in this point.—*Preached on the nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Ligatis manibus et pedibus ejus, mittite eum in tenebras exteriores.—Matth. xxii. 13.

"Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into exterior darkness."

Introduction.

You must either raise your hands to punish, when necessary, the misdeeds of your children in this life, or you must see them bound hand and foot, and cast into exterior darkness in the next life. What think you of that, Christian parents? Which of the alternatives do you choose? What do you think, children?

[1] Beati oculi.

Whether is it better to shed a few tears and suffer a little pain now and then, here, or to be cast into the gloomy lake of fire, where there is eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth, hereafter? No doubt you all choose the first. And that is exactly what is necessary in order to avoid the second; that is to say, children must sometimes weep here, to escape eternal wailing hereafter. Parents must punish and chastise their children here, that they may not be obliged to see them bound and cast into exterior darkness hereafter. And this is the third requisite for a Christian training. The tongue must be good, to instruct the children in piety and lead them on to it; the eyes must be good, to keep constant watch over them; and the hands, too, must be made use of to feel right, that is, to inflict due punishment on them. Such is the subject of to-day's instruction, or rather complaint, since there are so many who are wanting in this point.

Plan of Discourse.

Parents, who wish to bring up their children in a Christian manner, must chastise them in a parental way, when necessary. Such will be the short instruction of the first part. Many parents are guilty of grievous neglect in this point. The complaint of the second part.

That this defect may be amended, obtain for all parents, oh, Virgin Mother of God, and holy angels guardian, a powerful grace from God; so that none of them may hear the words: "Bind his hands,"[1] etc.

Every one is bound to fraternal correction.

There is a duty imposed by God on all men, although it is often disregarded, and that is the duty of fraternal correction. By that every one is bound, under pain of sin, to restrain his neighbor from sin, or if the latter has already sinned, to warn him, and if he continues obstinate, to accuse him to others who will have more influence over him. This obligation binds him who prudently foresees that he will easily be able to restrain, reprove, or accuse his neighbor, so that his correction will benefit the latter. This is the teaching of all theologians, founded on the words of the Holy Ghost: "He gave to every one commandment concerning his neighbor,"[2] and on the express command of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "If thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him

[1] Ligatis manibus ejus, etc. [2] Mandavit unicuique de proximo suo.—Eccl. xvii. 12.

alone."[1] If he listens to you, you have saved your brother's soul. If he despises your warning, take some one else with you as a witness, and repeat it. If you still find no trace of improvement—"And if he will not hear them, tell the Church"[2]—accuse him to his superiors. I have said elsewhere, when speaking of detraction, that it is not allowed to mention the secret sin of another in confession, if you can declare your own sin sufficiently otherwise. Yes, Christians, that is the case, and I repeat that it is not lawful to take away another's good name, even in the confessional; yet it is one thing to make known the private crime of another to one who is no better for knowing it, except that he knows it, and who therefore should be left in ignorance of it, and another to declare even the unknown sin of another to one who can induce, or help the guilty person to amend; this is not merely lawful, but it is a duty that binds every one, under pain of sin. Thus a neighbor is bound to tell the parents of their son or daughter, and the master and mistress of their servants, if they see the latter committing any sin unknown to the former. Thus, also, every one who notices anything dangerous in a house, and who prudently hopes to make matters better, is bound to make known the circumstances to those who are able to remove the danger. This is required by the law of Christian charity and fraternal correction, so that sins and offences against God may be prevented.

Much more are parents bound to correct their children, when necessary.

Why do I say all this, my dear brethren? In order that all Christian parents may learn therefrom what a great obligation is imposed on them by God, to punish their children in a parental manner, and to chastise them if they commit a fault, or do anything wrong; for if every man, if even strangers, who have nothing to do with your children, except that they are their neighbors, are bound to correct them when necessary, I repeat with St. John Chrysostom: How much greater and stricter is the obligation of the father[3] and mother in such a case, since they have given life to their children and are bound to keep them from evil, and to lead them on to virtue and to Heaven? And there can be less doubt about this, since God has given parents such great authority over their children, and has inspired children with such great reverence and respect for their parents. A father or mother who admonishes a child seriously, or speaks a word

[1] Si peccaverit in te frater tuus, vade et corripe eum inter te et ipsum solum.—Matth. xviii. 15.

[2] Quodsi non audierit eos, dic Ecclesiæ.—Ibid. 17.

[3] Quanto magis pater ergo, qui genuit.

of warning, or gives it a single threatening look, can do more to correct it, than any one else could by beating it. Without your correction and chastisement, oh, parents, there is no use in anything that others may do. What good can school-masters and teachers do your children, if you tolerate in the latter what ought to be punished? How can the catechist, the preacher, or the confessor induce them to amend their vicious lives, if you allow them to act as they please when they are not in Church, at the sermon, or in the confessional, and if, after you have noticed a few times that they are given to certain faults, you do not earnestly admonish and chastise them? No, it is all useless; you will never rear good children, no matter how much you preach to and instruct them, no matter how watchful you are over their conduct, unless you punish and chastise, in a parental manner, their faults and vices.

As God expects them to do.

Such is the case, Christian parents. If you wish to perform the duty of rearing your children properly, you must not spare the rod of chastisement, when it is useful and necessary, as the Wise Ecclesiasticus says. Hear the warning he gives, which, since it comes immediately from the Holy Ghost Himself, should have much more effect upon you than any words of mine: "He that loveth his son, frequently chastiseth him"—thus the 30th chapter begins—"that he may rejoice in his latter end, and not grope after the doors of his neighbors. A horse not broken becometh stubborn, and a child left to himself will become headstrong. Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid; play with him and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not with him, lest thou have sorrow, and at the last thy teeth be set on edge. Give him not liberty in his youth, and wink not at his devices. Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of heart to thee."[1] Fathers and mothers, mark these words of the Holy Ghost; learn from them how earnestly you must correct and chastise your children, from their earliest years, and that you must not spare the rod on your sons and daughters while they are young, if you wish to be saved from the necessity of applying it to them when they are grown up. In

[1] Qui diligit filium suum, assiduat illi flagella, ut lætetur in novissimo suo et non palpet proximorum ostia. Equus indomitus evadit durus, et filius remissus evadet præceps. Lacta filium, et paventem te faciet; lude cum eo, et contristabit te. Non corrideas illi, ne doleas et in novissimo obstupescent dentes tui. Nec des illi potestatem in juventute, et ne despicias cogitatus filius. Curva cervicem ejus in juventute, et tunde latera ejus, dum infans est, ne forte induret, et non credat tibi, et erit tibi dolor animæ. - Eccl. xxx. 1, 8–12.

their childhood you must not allow the least sign of anger, vindictiveness, untruthfulness, disobedience, frivolity, or vanity to go unpunished, so that these weeds may not take deeper root, and become more difficult to pull up afterwards. There is no doubt that it is indispensably necessary for parents to correct and chastise the faults and misdeeds of their children; and if this were done by all fathers and mothers in a proper manner, the morals and lives of Christians would be far better than they now are; but herein lies the great fault of many parents, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

They fail herein who are afraid to say a cross word to their children.

The natural love for very young children is so inordinate and foolish with many mothers and, what is still more surprising, with many fathers, that they fear to distress their children by saying a single cross word to them. They give them everything they ask for; they fulfil their every desire as quickly as possible, so as to avoid the grief and sorrow that the tears of their children would cause them. They are children, they say, we must have patience a little longer. And when the little ones notice that, they soon become lords and masters over their own parents, and the latter must obey their every command and slightest wish, like most dutiful servants; for they know how to use the weapons that they have already found to be so powerful, that is, their tears. I have occasionally seen families in which this was the case, and I have secretly pitied the poor parents, who were ruled over by their little sons or daughters to such an extent, that they had to make children of themselves, and were obliged to run up and down and play about with the little one for half the day. If the father said one thing, the child asserted the contrary; if the mother said yes, the child said no; if it did not at once get what it wished for, it began to cry, so that father and mother were quite ready to obey it and do its will. Even then they had a great deal of trouble to make the wilful child satisfied and contented. Oh, thought I to myself, what would I do, if I had to submit to that slavery? If I had charge of that child, I would go quite another way to work with it, and would soon make it submit, and do my will.

By which children are spoiled.

Is that the way to love children and bring them up in a Christian manner? Does it not rather tend to make them stubborn, impudent, obstinate, wilful, and disobedient, and in such a way

that it will be impossible afterwards to correct them of those faults? And what are you doing by this over-indulgence, but cutting a rod to beat yourselves? For you are rearing up a disobedient son, a wilful daughter, who will afterwards occasion you much grief and anxiety. Hence, the Holy Ghost says, as we have seen already: "Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid," when he grows up; "play with him, and he will make thee sorrowful,"[1] and turn thy laughter into tears. The Wise Solomon says in the Book of Proverbs: "The child that is left to his own will bringeth his mother to shame."[2] Formerly, as St. Jerome writes, children, as soon as they were born, were sprinkled with salt, that their limbs might grow strong and vigorous. In our days, so to speak, the children are sprinkled with honey and sugar. What wonder is it, then, that they afterwards occasion their parents so much trouble and grief? How many parents there are who now experience the truth of that, in the torment that they have with their children, because they did not punish and chastise them in their youth! If they had done so, the children would now be obedient and respectful to them. As it is, the poor parents come weeping and complaining; but to what purpose? They may thank themselves for the troubles they have. It is too late to do anything now. The tree has grown up crooked, and cannot be straightened.

The rod must not be spared with young children.

The Wise Ecclesiasticus says: "Beat his sides while he is a child,"[3] and still in the cradle. The rod must be used whenever he refuses to obey his father or mother, because young children especially have not a due sense of reverence, and can be kept in restraint only by fear. In that way you will make a deep impression on his imagination, so that he will know that there is a beating in store for him whenever he does wrong. But the poor, dear child commences to cry so pitifully when he feels the rod! Quite right, let him feel it; such tears are the best and most salutary food he could have; for corporal food preserves only the mortal body, while due chastisement saves the immortal soul. If that same child were suffering from some illness, and had to take a bitter medicine, would you send away the doctor, because the child makes a wry face and cries when he sees him? On the contrary, you compel the child to take

[1] Lacta filium et paventem te faciet; lude cum eo, et contristabit te.
[2] Puer, qui dimittitur voluntati suæ, confundit matrem suam.—Prov. xxix. 15.
[3] Tunde latera ejus, dum infans est.

the medicine, no matter how bitter it is. But he cries. That is nothing, you say; better for him to cry and get well again, than to laugh and die. And you are quite right! But is his soul of less importance? To save it, you must often employ the bitter medicine of chastisement, and would you allow the child's tears to prevent you from using it, and thus destroy his precious soul?

Others fail herein who reprove merely, and do not punish their children.

Again, parents sin by the same foolish love—or shall we rather call it hatred and anger—towards their children, when they correct their grown-up sons and daughters, in the way in which the high-priest Heli corrected his children; that is, by mere words. They curse and swear, and threaten all sorts of things to their children, but never fulfil their threats, because they are afraid to cause pain to their dear son or daughter; and yet they know by experience that their threats have not the least effect. What an unchristian and foolish love that is!

Explained by a simile.

Father, mother, I will borrow a simile from St. John Chrysostom: Imagine that you are walking with your child along the river. The child goes a few paces away from you and falls into the deep water. What will you do? Will you stretch out your hand to save him from being drowned? Who could doubt it? You would do that even at the risk of your own life. But the child is already nearly under the water, and you must catch him by the hair to pull him up. Will you do that? Or will you rather say: Oh, I cannot bear to pull my darling child by the hair; it would hurt him too much; I could never bring myself to do it! Oh, foolish parents, will you then look on while your child is drowning, and not try to save him? My opinion is that if it were necessary to pull one of his arms off to save his life, in such a case, you would not hesitate to do it.

How foolish such parents are.

Now, father, pay attention. You hear from well-meaning friends, you see and know yourself that your son plays truant from school and Church, and spends his time running about the streets with bad boys; that he can curse and swear, and gamble, and drink; that he does not go to catechism or sermon on Sundays and holy-days; that he never says his morning and evening prayers. Ah, your son is in great danger! Help him at once, or he will be lost forever! Mother, if you see that your daughter is too vain and frivolous in her behavior; that she is too free in company; that she idles about the house, and sometimes in the street; that she is not restrained enough in the company of some friend or neighbor of the opposite sex; that

she laughs and jokes with him alone in the garden, or at the house door late at night,—then is the time to help your child, for she will otherwise be ruined. Now what will you do in such circumstances? I am speaking now to father and mother. What will you do, I ask? You may stretch out your hand to save your child, that is, you venture on a mild expostulation, as Heli did: "Why do ye these kind of things which I hear, very wicked things, from all the people? Do not so, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear."[1] In the same way you say to your children: My son, that is not right; my daughter, that is not becoming; you must not do that! Well-reared daughters must stay at home, and employ themselves in some suitable work. Have you not heard what was said in the sermon, that children who act as you do, are in danger of losing their souls? Girls who act in such a manner will never get good husbands, etc. But what is the use of all that talk? It will not save your children from the danger in which they are. They are sinking deeper and deeper: you must exert yourself to more purpose, and stretch forth your arm to help them; that is to say, you put on an angry countenance and threaten them, saying: Take care, if you do not amend I will punish you severely; I have a rod in pickle for you, etc. But these threats are of no use either. They frighten only for the moment; the children are used to them, and they know that they are only harmless thunderstorms, without lightning. They appear to tremble, but in reality they are laughing at you in their sleeve, and they think: Oh, I have heard that often enough! Thus they are on the point of sinking altogether; you must pull them out by the hair; that is, you must chastise them seriously and in a parental manner, until they show signs of improvement, not merely in words, but in deeds. But, alas, the mother says, and sometimes the father, too, although he should have more sense, I cannot bear to beat the darling child! Children must not be ruled with the rod! No? then the darling child must go to ruin, while you, father and mother, look on, and prefer to see your son or daughter howling amongst the demons forever, rather than cause them to shed a few tears here on earth by your parental chastisement! Do you think your children will thank you hereafter for such a foolish love? How could they?

Still more foolish are they who not only refuse to punish their

The worst fault is that

[1] Quare facitis res hujusmodi, quas ego audio, res pessimas, ab omni populo? Nolite, filii mei; non enim est bona fama, quam ego audio.—I. Kings ii. 23, 24.

of those who cannot bear to see their children punished by others.

children when the latter do amiss, but even do not permit other well-meaning persons to perform this duty. Sometimes a child is punished in school for a fault; it knows that the punishment was deserved, and is very careful not to say a word to father or mother about the matter. But if the parents hear of the punishment, what a noise they make! They call the teacher an unmannerly, coarse, and savage person, instead of thanking him for what he has done. And that, sometimes, even in presence of the children, although the latter would otherwise bear their punishment patiently enough. A fine way that to rear children! Sometimes a neighbor comes with the best possible intentions, and says to the father or mother, as he is in duty bound: I have heard so and so of your son, or daughter; I myself have seen them act in such and such a way; I thought it right to tell you, that you may correct them in time, etc. Whereupon the parents get quite angry, and say: It is not true; it is false; mind your own children and leave me to manage mine. So that they do not wish to hear anything of the bad conduct of their children, or pretend not to know anything of it, that they may not be forced to punish them. A fine way, indeed, of rearing children! What can be the end of such children?

Blindness of parents when one prevents the other from punishing the children.

Sometimes a sensible father wishes to do his duty in this particular, when the mother rushes up, crying and screaming: You murderer, do you want to kill the child? Or, on the other hand, as is also frequently the case, a pious mother is determined to administer due punishment to her child, but she is prevented by the foolish father. Thus the children have a protector, to whom they know they can fly for refuge, when they have done wrong, and of course they trouble themselves little about the faults they commit, or about the threats of punishment they hear. I have known children who dared to say to their mother, who was about to punish them: "Wait till my father comes home; I will tell him, and then you must look out." Ah, blind parents, is that the way you love your children? Do you not see that such apparent mildness and mercy is, in reality, the greatest cruelty that you could practise towards them? You are like the apes that press their young to death through sheer love. You drive your unfortunate children to a still more terrible death, that of their immortal souls, by your false love, since you do not punish them when you ought.

They thus occasion the

You, parents, who are in any way wanting in this duty, hear what the holy Pope, St. Gregory, relates of his own experience

with a child five years old. Lest I should appear to exaggerate, I give you his own words: "Although it is reasonable to believe that all children who are duly baptised and die in childhood go to Heaven, yet it is not an infallible truth that each and every little one who can speak, goes to Heaven after death; for their parents, by not bringing them up properly, close Heaven against them. A certain man, who was well known in this city, had, three years ago, a little son, who seemed to me to be about five years old. The man had an inordinate love for this child, and was much too indulgent to him, and, terrible to relate, the little boy used to blaspheme the divine majesty when anything displeased him. Three years ago this child fell mortally ill, and (as is attested by eye-witnesses), while he was reclining in his father's arms, he saw, to his dismay, the evil spirits approach him: "Help, father, help!"[1] he cried out in a loud voice, and hid his face in his father's bosom, so as to avoid the dreadful sight. The father asked him what was the matter, and he answered: There are black men coming to take me away; whereupon he again blasphemed God, and died. Thus the Almighty God, for some reason or other, allowed those robbers to take away the soul of that child, that in his last moments he might show that on account of not being duly chastised by his father, he died blaspheming God, in the actual commission of the sin that the divine patience had so long borne with. So that the father might see how guilty he was in neglecting the soul of his little son, and thus rearing up a great sinner for hell-fire."[2] Such are the words of St. Gregory, in the 4th Book of his Dialogues, chapter 18th. My God, according to the opinion of such a holy man, a child of five years was dragged down to hell by demons! What will then become of those grown-up sons and daughters, who commit many sins through habit, because their parents do not chastise them? Is it not punishment enough for you, oh, parents, that by your foolish love, or rather senseless cruelty, you condemn your own flesh and blood to the eternal flames of hell?

loss of their children's souls. Shown by a simile.

Ah, blind parents, I repeat, what a strict account you will one day have to give in your own persons for the many sins that your children committed and did not repent of, because you did not chastise them properly! And what a terrible punishment you have to expect from the divine anger! You have often heard of

These parents will be severely punished by God. Proved from Scripture.

[1] Obsta pater! obsta.

[2] Quatenus reatum suum pater ejus agnosceret, qui parvuli filii animam negligens, non parvulum peccatorem gehennæ ignibus nutrisset.

the high-priest Heli, and how God was so wroth with him, that He took away the priestly dignity from him and his children forever, and deprived them of life as well. "Behold I do a thing in Israel," said the angry God to Samuel; "and whosoever shall hear it, both his ears shall tingle. In that day I will raise up against Heli all the things I have spoken concerning his house; I will begin and I will make an end. For I have foretold unto him, that I will judge his house forever, for iniquity."[1] Nay, some of the holy Fathers, and amongst them St. John Chrysostom, are of the opinion that Heli and his sons are lost forever. Why did God judge them so severely? He tells us Himself: "Therefore have I sworn to the house of Heli, that the iniquity of his house shall not be expiated with victims nor offerings forever."[2] Terrible words! And woe to King David, inasmuch as he did not punish the crime of Amnon, nor chastise Absalom for the murder of his brother. If he had done his duty, he need not have suffered so much, nor shed so many bitter tears afterwards! Still greater woe to those careless parents, who allow too much liberty to their children, and do not punish them when they deserve it; and yet refuse to repent of their negligence, because their foolish love blinds them, and they do not consider that negligence sinful!

Conclusion and exhortation to children to thank their parents for chastisement.

In conclusion, I turn to you, children. You will henceforth have no very good opinion of me. You will say that I have taken your part very badly to-day, for I know well that you do not like to hear anything of beatings and punishment. The rod is an ugly thing that you would rather see in the fire, than in the hands of your parents. Yet, you may believe me when I say that there could be nothing better for you than the subject of to-day's sermon, and you will one day thank me for having spoken to your parents, apparently against, but really for your advantage. If your father and mother are too indulgent to you, so that you are thus led into evil ways, you will one day (and let this be a conclusion for parents, too,) be the first to utter complaints against them, and your complaints will be eternal. Such was the complaint of St. Augustine against his father: "The thorns of lust," he says, "were growing over my head, and there was no one to

[1] Ecce ego facio verbum in Israel, quod quicunque audierit, tinnient ambæ aures ejus In die illa suscitabo adversum Heli omnia, quæ locutus sum super domum ejus, incipiam et complebo. Prædixi enim ei, quod judicaturus essem domum ejus in æternum propter iniquitatem.—I. Kings iii. 11, 12, 13.

[2] Idcirco juravi domui Heli, quod non expietur iniquitas domus ejus victimis et muneribus usque in æternum.—Ibid. 14.

pull them up."[1] In the same way, too, the malefactor condemned to the gallows, of whom Gerson writes, was wroth with his parents. He asked to speak to his father before suffering the last penalty, and when the latter came up to him, he leaned forward under the pretence of embracing him, and bit off his nose, saying at the same time, in a loud voice: "If you had chastised me better when I was young, I should not be here, now." And what will you say, children, if through want of chastisement, you grow up wicked, and lose your souls? That you may not then have to complain fruitlessly, do not complain now; but be glad and thank your parents when they chastise you, in a parental manner, for the faults you commit. Kiss the rod as a token of submission and gratitude to your parents for the great benefit they have thereby conferred on you, so that you may rejoice with them in Heaven for all eternity. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Et factum est, dum irent, mundati sunt.—Luke xvii. 14.
"And it came to pass, as they went, they were made clean."

What the lepers said to Jesus Christ: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us,"[2] might be said to their parents by many children, who are suffering from spiritual leprosy, through want of proper training, if they only understood their condition, and loved their souls. Father, mother, have mercy on us! Teach us how to fear and love God. Father, mother, have mercy on us! Be watchful over our actions, so that we may not be lost. These two conditions, as we have seen, my dear brethren, are necessary to a Christian training, namely, to speak right, so as to teach the children what is good, and to see right, so as to keep a watchful eye upon their actions. Now, the Gospel of to-day says of the lepers: "And it came to pass, as they went, they were made clean."[3] Where were they going? To the priests, as Christ had commanded them. The priests of the Old Law used to lay their hands on lepers, and pronounce them free from leprosy. See, Christian parents, what is still required for the proper training of your children, if they are to be cleansed from sins and faults, or to be preserved from them—*continues as before.*

[1] Ascendebant vepres libidinis super caput meum. . . et non erat manus eradicans, etc.
[2] Jesu, præceptor, miserere nostri. —Luke xvii. 13.
[3] Et factum est, dum irent, mundati sunt.

FORTY-FOURTH SERMON.

ON THE PATERNAL CHASTISEMENT OF CHILDREN.

Subject.

This chastisement must be inflicted: 1st. With a good intention for a proper end. 2d. With discretion and parental love.—*Preached on the twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Domine, descende prius quam moriatur filius meus.—John iv. 49. "Lord, come down before that my son die."

Introduction.

That father was careful of his son's life! After having tried every means in vain, he at length ventured to ask Jesus Christ to heal his son by a miracle. Our Lord did not at once answer the father's petition, but commenced to speak of other matters, namely, of the people's want of faith: "Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not."[1] But the father, uneasy about his son, interrupted our Lord at once, and said: "Lord, come down before that my son die." As if he meant: this is not the time for talk, but for action: Quick Lord; help my son, or he will die! "Come down."[2] So much concerned, my dear brethren, was this father for the temporal life of his son. Perhaps if the latter had been in danger of eternal death, his father would not have been so uneasy. Oh, how many parents there are in our days who trouble themselves very little about that danger! If their children are suffering from bodily illness, and are in danger of death, how the parents weep and lament! Every means is tried to save the beloved child's life, and to restore it to health; but if the soul is sick and dead through sin, hardly any one is concerned about it; although that spiritual illness and death are manifest enough, so that there can be no doubt in the case, there is no one to lend a helping hand. I have shown on last Sunday, that to train children properly and to keep them from sin, or to make them repent of sin committed, and consequently to preserve the life of

[1] Nisi signa et prodigia videritis, non creditis.—John iv. 48.
[2] Descende.

their souls, their faults and feelings must be chastised and punished; and at the same time, I complained of the great negligence of so many parents, who, through foolish love, and the fear of causing their children pain, give way to them in everything, like the apes that are so fond of their young that they press them to death with their embraces. There is still another point to be observed in connection with this duty, and that is, how chastisement is to be inflicted so that the children may be made better thereby, and be brought to eternal life. Many parents punish their children, when the latter commit a fault, but they do not do it properly, and therefore do more harm than good to the souls of their children. How that chastisement must be inflicted I will tell you in this instruction.

Plan of Discourse.

This chastisement must be inflicted with a good intention for the proper end. The first part. With moderation and parental love. The second part.

Neither of these two is observed by every one. That both may henceforth be observed by all, we ask of God through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the holy angels guardian.

Everything must be done for a good end, the honor and glory of God.

"Do all to the glory of God,"[1] is the exhortation the Apostle St. Paul gives us. All, he says, without exception. "Whether you eat or drink," or wake or sleep, or labor or rest, are sorrowful or cheerful, or "whatsoever else you do," great or small, "do all to the glory of God."[2] So that in all those things, and by all our thoughts, words, and deeds, we can merit Heaven, if we only do them with a good intention for a supernatural end. What a happiness for us, oh, God of goodness, that we can so easily, and even by means of works that appear most despicable, gain eternal joys and increase them the whole day long! And how deplorable the condition of most men in the world, even of those who otherwise lead good lives, since they hardly ever think of this good intention during the day, and thus lose countless eternities of heavenly joys, so to speak, in a single week, which they will never have another chance of regaining! But I must not waste my time in such lamentations now.

[1] Omnia in gloriam Dei facite.

[2] Sive manducatis, sive bibitis, sive aliud quid facitis, omnia in gloriam Dei facite.—I. Cor. 31.

Hence, too, the correction of children.

Everything must be done for the honor and glory of God, Christian parents, and consequently and especially the chastisement and correction of your children, when it is necessary, must be directed to the glory of God as to its proper end. You must have no intention, when inflicting it, but to amend your children's way of life, keep them from sin, and lead them on to good, even by violent means. Oh, if this were the only thing that sets in motion the reproving tongue, or chastising hand of a father or mother, there would not be so many great faults committed by parents in this particular, to the great detriment of their children !

Those parents err who punish according to their humor.

That end is altogether disregarded, first by those parents who inflict punishment according to the humor they are in. If they are in a bad humor, if they are annoyed and put out about something, oh, then the children had better keep out of their way, for if the least thing goes wrong, they beat them unmercifully, and do not always distinguish between the innocent and the guilty. If they are in a good humor, they are ready to overlook any number of faults and short-comings, although they may be committed before their very eyes. That is not the way to inflict punishment for the glory of God, because God has commanded it, and the salvation of the children requires it. It is inflicting punishment because the father or mother is out of temper. What good will that do the children, and how can they help it, if their parents are in an ill-humor ? Why, then, should they be made to pay for that ill-humor by blows ?

Who only punish faults that make them angry.

Those parents also fail in this point, who use the rod only when the children are guilty of a fault that vexes the father or mother, while they allow serious faults to remain unpunished because they are not angry, nor displeased, nor hurt by them. For instance, a wilful child breaks a glass through love of mischief, the father or mother immediately beats the child severely. And quite deservedly, too. But on another occasion the same child curses, or swears, or uses indecent language, by which God alone is offended. That is another thing altogether ; it is passed over unnoticed, or at most a half threat is uttered to deter the child from such expressions. So that the punishment was not inflicted for the proper end in the first case, nor because God was angry at the fault committed, but solely because the parents were vexed at the loss they sustained.

Who caress their children im-

Thirdly, those parents do not punish as they ought, who beat their children in anger, when the latter deserve it, but immedi-

ately afterwards commence to caress and talk kindly to them, to show that they are sorry and wish to be forgiven. That is clear proof that neither the amendment of the fault, nor the glory of God, was the reason why they inflicted the punishment, but simply a desire of giving vent to their anger. Such chastisement is neither parental, nor salutary; it should be earnest and serious, so that the children may learn by experience that every fault they commit will be punished, and may see by the continued displeasure of their parents how great the wrong is that they have committed.

mediately after punishing them.

Fourthly, there are parents who make a difference between their children when punishing them, and who thereby commit a grievous error. For instance, there are in the same family two boys and two girls. One son and one daughter are never looked upon as guilty by their parents, while the other two are never able to please them; so that whatever happens, the first two are never wrong, and the others never right. Every venial sin of the latter is magnified into a mortal sin, while if the former commit a fault that ought to be punished, the father and mother only laugh, and are amused at it. But if the latter are guilty of the same fault, their parents have only sour looks, and cross words, and even blows for them. Why is that? What is the cause of this different treatment? The fault is the same in both cases, and deserves the same punishment, in order to be corrected. Yes, that is true, but the one son and daughter are their parents' favorites, or their grandmother's pets (as if the others were not their children also!). They must not be beaten, nor spoken crossly to; that would cause too much sorrow to the father, or mother, or grandmother! The others, who are sometimes more beloved by God, "have not yet found favor"[1] with their parents, either because they are not so beautiful and clever as the former, or because they are a little stupid and backward, or suffer from some other natural defect, for which they are not to be blamed, as it is inborn in them; therefore, they get all the beatings and cannot stir in the house, while the favorites may do as they please. What an injustice, what a wrong, oh, parents! Is that the way to punish children with a good intention, for the glory of God, and for their last end, and to correct their faults? For the blind love for some causes their faults to be overlooked, while the same faults in the others are punished.

Who make a difference between their children, when punishing them.

And what think you of this? You do not perhaps imagine

Hence comes great misery.

[1] Non invenerunt gratiam.

that a great deal of misery will be the result of treating children so differently. In the first place, the punishment that you inflict on the child whom you care less for, can do it little good, and will only serve to embitter and render it desperate. For it is quite able to see that the punishment does not come from parental affection and love, but from hatred and dislike. In the second place, a necessary consequence of this favoritism is envy, discord, and enmity between brothers and sisters, which sinks deep into the tender minds of children, and remains with them their whole lifetime. The Sacred Scripture says of the Patriarch Jacob: "Now Israel loved Joseph above all his sons."[1] And what was the consequence? Nothing but bitterness, envy, and vindictiveness amongst the brothers of Joseph, which they made him feel. "They could not speak peaceably to him."[2] They wished to kill him: "Behold the dreamer cometh; come, let us kill him."[3] They cast him into a deep pit, to let him die of hunger, but when the Ishmaelite merchants passed by, they sold him as a slave into a distant land, and caused his father great sorrow. St. Ambrose, commenting on this passage, reproves Jacob, and gives a salutary warning to all parents: Jacob loved Joseph most, he says, and he had cause enough for this preference, because Joseph was more worthy of love, and more apt to win over his father's heart, than his brethren. He was wiser and more clever, more obedient to his father, and more pious and devout towards God, than the others, and besides that, Jacob, like all old people, was most inclined to love the son of his old age. But he was wrong in showing that outwardly, for he should not have given cause for discord and envy amongst his children: "From this example all parents should learn,"[4] continues St. Ambrose, that although one child is more beautiful or clever, or better mannered than another, although he knows better how to please and flatter his father or mother, and therefore the latter are naturally more inclined to love him, yet they must not give the least outward sign of this inclination. The same faults must be punished in the same manner, without any distinction; all the children must be treated with the same affection and the same severity, if their good or ill-conduct is alike, nor is there any other way of making punishment profitable to them.

[1] Israel autem diligebat Joseph super omnes filios suos.—Gen. xxxvii. 3.
[2] Nec poterant ei quidquam pacifice loqui.—Ibid. 4.
[3] Ecce somniator venit; venite occidamus eum.—Ibid. 19, 20.
[4] Hoc exemplo docentur parentes.

Who curse and abuse while punishing

Finally, they do not punish their children with a proper motive, who in place of chastisement, or while administering it, give way to cursing, swearing, or abusive language against their children. Is that a Christian, or a parental way of punishing a child? Can that be for the glory of God, since God is offended and His commandment is broken in the very act? Can there be any assistance to amendment, to avoid sin, or to practise virtue, in a chastisement which teaches children wickedness, and induces them to follow their parents' bad example? so that they, too, curse and swear, and often (since the cursing of parents has a powerful influence on the children, as I shall show hereafter more fully, and as experience proves) are given up to the devil, and to all sorts of misfortunes, God so permitting it. Is that chastisement salutary, and apt to make children more obedient and respectful to their parents, and more ready to follow their advice in future, by which children lose all respect and esteem for their parents, and have not only a bad opinion of them, but even hate and detest them on account of their horrible habit of cursing? Of such parents we may say with truth what the impious Jews falsely said of Christ through hatred and envy: "By the prince of devils, He casteth out devils."[1] They, too, wish to cast out devils from their children by invoking the prince of darkness. No; all such chastisements are not administered for a good end, and therefore they cannot help either the parents to merit, or the children to amend. But in addition to the proper end it must have, chastisement must also be inflicted with discretion and parental love, if it is to do any good, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

A doctor must use great discretion in prescribing medicines.

If ever a professional man is obliged to use great discretion and reflection in the actual exercise of his art, certainly it is a doctor who prescribes and administers medicines. For, in the first place, they who prescribe a great deal of medicines, and are always trying on something new with the sick person, are not the best doctors; but rather they who are able to cure the disease by a few simple and effective remedies: for too much medicine, although it may overcome the sickness, ruins the stomach, and occasions loss of strength, so that the sick person requires a long time to recover after having taken it. In the second place, if a doctor

[1] In principe dæmoniorum ejicit dæmonia.—Luke xi. 15.

gave the same medicine to all his patients, although they may be suffering from the same fever, and the medicine may be good against that fever, he would act very imprudently and indiscreetly. Because, though the patients have all the same disease, yet some have it worse than others, and besides, the constitutions of people differ very much, some being naturally stronger than others. Thus the same medicine given in like quantity, would be too weak for some people and too strong for others, and therefore it would not help, but rather injure them. Hence an experienced doctor endeavors, first of all, to find out the constitution of his patient, and then prescribes according to that. In the third place, painful remedies, such as burning, cutting, amputating, and the like, are seldom used, and only when all other means have proved ineffectual. Even at the commencement of the malady, when it is not sufficiently developed, clever doctors use only domestic medicines, as they are called, and they are often better than others. It is only when such medicines fail to produce an effect that they send to the apothecary. Besides all this, the proper time must be observed at which to administer the medicine. If the fever is at its height, the medicine will produce no effect, it should not be given until the paroxysm is passed. Cornelius Celsus says, writing of the cure of diseases: "It would kill a sick person to bleed him in the height of the fever; that must not be done until the fever has somewhat abated."[1]

So also parents when chastising children.

See there, Christian parents, an example of the discretion you must use in chastising your children! The faults that your sons and daughters commit are the maladies of their souls, which if not cured in time will cause them eternal death. You are the physicians of their souls. God has intrusted you with that office, and the medicine you have to administer is parental correction and chastisement.

Continual punishment does little good.

And, in the first place, just as too much medicine often does more harm than good, so those parents do not correct their children properly who always cuff or beat them, or pull their ears for the least fault, and who never overlook anything, but punish the slightest mistakes even more severely than they do serious ones. The children are not improved by that; on the contrary, they become dulled and callous, so that they do not feel the punishment; like an old horse that is so accustomed to bit and spur, that neither has any effect on him in the end. The celebrated horse, Bucephalus, as Curtius writes, after having been

[1] In ipso impetu febris sanguinem emittere, hominem jugulare est; exspectanda remissio.

severely beaten, became so unmanageable that no one could ride him. Alexander the Great was grieved to see such a fine animal spoiled, and seizing him by the bridle, he commenced to pat and caress him, and speak to him in a friendly tone. He thereby tamed the horse so completely that the formerly ungovernable animal would kneel down to allow his rider to mount him. In the same way the correction of children does not always consist in beating and striking them, especially when such punishment is inflicted too frequently. Parental chastisement is a medicine that must be given at a suitable time, and it must not be used as daily food. Sometimes, especially when a fault is committed for the first time, a cross look, at other times a serious threat, has more effect than any amount of beating, in making children amend their shortcomings.

The punishment must be suited to the child's character.

Again, just as a skilful and prudent doctor studies the constitution of his patients, so also parents must always take into account the characters of the children whom they are about to punish. When they are still very young, and have not come to the full use of reason, they require far different treatment from that which would suit them when they are more advanced in years. Little children must be governed by fear, and therefore, if they do anything wrong, they must be made to feel the rod. But with grown-up children this means is not always salutary. Some are naturally retiring, bashful, and modest, and if they were beaten only once, they would lose their bashfulness altogether. Others are vain-glorious and boastful, and for them there can be no better punishment than to humiliate them by laughing at, or ridiculing them in presence of their brothers and sisters. Prudent parents will find opportunities enough of doing this. Others know how to flatter and fawn on their parents, so as to gain their favor. For these the hardest punishment would be to remain unnoticed by their parents for a time, when they commit a fault, not to be spoken to, to be looked at sternly, or to be treated with indifference. Others, again, feel most severely being deprived of some food or drink that they are very fond of, or being left out when presents are given to other children. These and similar punishments may be used by prudent parents, according to the different characters of their children, and always with reference to the eternal salvation of the latter. With grown-up children, generally speaking, the rod should be the last resource, just as burning and cutting are the last resources with sick people, and should not be used until all other means have failed. But when

it is used, it should be done in earnest, so that a second application may not be necessary.

Always with parental affection.

Yet it must always be done with due regard for parental affection. Hence, those stern fathers are wrong who make their poor children tremble and fly before them, as if they had seen a wild beast. Of such parents the Wise Man says: "Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them of thy household."[1] No; children should have a childlike, and not a servile fear of their parents. They must be corrected and punished, certainly, but in the same way in which the heavenly Father corrects His elect children: He sends them many trials and crosses during their lives, but only because He loves them, and because He wishes them thereby to atone for their past sins, to be freed from vicious inclinations, or to be strengthened in virtue, and thus to acquire greater merit for themselves and greater glory in Heaven. With the same parental affection should the rod be used on children, with the sole purpose of punishing their faults and vices. St. Augustine says: "He who says sinful man, speaks of two different things; punish him, therefore, because he is sinful, but have mercy on him because he is a man."[2]

And therefore never in anger.

Therefore it is advisable for parents never to punish their children immediately after a fault, and while they still feel angry. They should wait till their anger is over, although they might then be obliged to defer the punishment for a whole week, provided, that is to say, that the child has been admonished of his fault. For instance, you might say to him: You see now what you have done; you must not expect to get off without punishment. And believe me that such a mode of chastisement is best for the children, and makes far more impression on them, than if they were punished at once after a fault, for while they are waiting, they are apt to be far more careful, and more afraid of giving their parents displeasure, since the punishment is still hanging over their heads. I know myself from experience that school teachers have tried this plan and have found it so successful that after having kept the children in expectation of punishment for a fortnight after the fault was committed, they could afford to let them off altogether, because the latter were in such a state of suspense that they suffered more during that time than if they had actually been punished, and that they would have been quite pleased to have received due chastisement at once, so as to have it over. But

[1] Noli esse sicut leo in domo tua evertens domesticos tuos.—Eccl. iv. 35.

[2] Duo nomina sunt: homo peccator. . . . . quia homo est miserere.

many parents say : I cannot punish my child unless I am angry. More is the pity ; for that is a sure sign that punishment is inflicted in anger, and not with parental affection. You must overcome yourself, although the tears are forced from you while correcting your child ; the punishment will then be all the more efficacious, because it will be in accordance with the command of St. Paul : " Bring up your children in the discipline and correction of the Lord."[1] Mark the words, " in the correction of the Lord," according to what the Prophet Habacuc says: " When thou art angry, thou wilt remember mercy."[2] Chastisement of this kind convinces children that their parents really love them, and punish them only for their good.

Exhortation to children to rejoice when they are chastised.

And to you, Christian children, I must again speak, in conclusion. You must not think that the rod is an instrument of hatred and vengeance ; it is rather one of love, and is used to correct your faults or to prevent them, so that your parents may thus lead you to Heaven. If the young plants in a garden had sense and reason, they would not complain when the gardener comes with a knife to cut off their superfluous branches. On the contrary, they would say: Cut away everything that is useless and injurious to us, although you have to hurt and wound us thereby ; for we wish to be properly trimmed, so that we may adorn the garden and produce better fruit. Such should also be your sentiment, Christian children, when your father or mother takes the rod to punish you. You should think : I have deserved it ; it is good and useful for me to be thus corrected and purged of my evil habits. And therefore, according to the custom in Christian families, you should, as I have said before, kiss the rod in token of thankfulness, after having received your punishment. What you cannot or will not understand now, you will see clearly enough later on, and will say with grateful hearts: Oh, what a good father and mother I have had : they did not allow me to do wrong when I was young, and punished all my faults ! Oh, precious rod, you will exclaim, which has preserved me from sin, and brought me to repentance ! What better would I be now, if my parents had always flattered and caressed me, so that I should hereafter be obliged to do eternal penance for my sins in hell ? I must now cry out with David : Oh, Lord, " Thy rod and Thy staff," which Thou hast placed in my parents' hands, " they have comforted me."[3] Precious rod, thou art the key that openest

[1] Educate filios vestros in disciplina et correptione Domini.—Ephes. vi. 4.
[2] Cum iratus fueris, misericordiæ recordaberis.—Habac. iii. 2.
[3] Virga tua et baculus tuus, ipsa me consolata sunt.—Ps. xxii. 4.

the gate of Heaven to me! Blessed be the hand of my father, of my mother, which, next to God, I have to thank for eternal happiness! With these sentiments, with this gratitude and desire of amendment, you, oh, children, must always submit to parental chastisement, and you, oh, parents, must always administer it with a good intention, out of sincere love, so that you may all be numbered, by your heavenly Father, amongst His elect children. Amen.

FORTY-FIFTH SERMON.

ON THE GOOD EXAMPLE THAT PARENTS SHOULD GIVE THEIR CHILDREN.

Subject.

The best and most necessary means to bring up children in a Christian manner, and to lead them to Heaven, is the pious life and good example of their parents.—*Preached on the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Jussit eum dominus ejus venundari, et uxorem ejus, et filios, et omnia quæ habebat, et reddi.—Matth. xviii. 25.

"His lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made."

Introduction.

But how could the poor children prevent their father from wasting his master's property, and not being able to pay his debts? Why, then, were they to be sold as slaves, and to atone so severely for the fault of another? Because the master probably thought that the children must be like their parents, and therefore would be just as extravagant with his money. Hence, he sentences them without mercy, and orders the man, and his wife and children, to be sold, that the debt may be paid. Christian parents, what will be the sentence of the heavenly Judge, when you shall one day appear before Him, to give an account of the property He intrusted to your care—I mean the souls of your children, which

He will demand, as a precious treasure, at your hands? Oh, woe to you, if by negligence in bringing up your children, you have squandered this treasure! Where will you find the means of paying your debt, and making good the loss of those souls? And what will be your fate? You have no other sentence to expect, but that which was passed on the servant in to-day's Gospel. You and your children will be condemned to eternal slavery; you, because you were the cause of your children's ruin; they, because they led bad lives, on account of the bad training they got from their parents, and after the example of the latter, incurred the debt of sin. Therefore, parents, I warn you again, to bring up your children well, and take care of their souls, that they may go to Heaven; as I have told you already several times. The means that you must use to that end are salutary instruction in good, constant watchfulness over all the actions of your children, and parental correction of their faults. I repeat it so often, that it may sink all the deeper into your minds, since the salvation of so many souls depends on it. We have still one point, and that the principal one, to consider, namely, the necessity of the parents living piously and giving good example to their children. This is the matter of to-day's instruction.

Plan of Discourse.

The best and most necessary means to bring up children in a Christian manner, and to lead them to Heaven, is the pious life and good example of their parents.

Christ Jesus, who hast taught Thy Apostles and many others to imitate Thee, give Thy grace to all parents, that they may henceforth give a good example to their children; and to the children, that they may imitate their parents. This we all beg of Thee, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the holy angels guardian, so that no family may hear the terrible sentence: "His Lord commanded that he should be sold," etc. [1]

According as a mirror is made or colored, so does it represent what it reflects.

According as the glass of a mirror is ground or colored, so does it reflect in different ways the image of him who looks at it. If the glass is green, the image is green; if it is red, so is the image; and if it is clear and spotless, it will represent the image faithfully. Some mirrors make little things appear great, others apparently diminish great objects. Some make everything seem distorted, others beautify things that are really ugly. The best are

[1] Jussit eum Dominus ejus venundari, etc.

those which truly reflect the spots and deformities on the face, so that they may be removed.

Monkeys imitate what they see others do.

Again, it is peculiar to monkeys to imitate whatever they see another doing, so that one must be very careful in the presence of such dangerous animals. Ælianus writes of a monkey that, according to a common custom, was allowed to go about the house at will. It one day saw how the mistress of the house undressed her little baby, bathed it in tepid water, and then wiped it dry again. Some time after, when the mother was away, and no one else was present, the monkey took the child out of the cradle, undressed it, and brought it into the kitchen, where there was a vessel full of boiling water, on the fire. He dipped the child into the water, and took it out again, as he had seen its mother do. He repeated the operation until the child was actually boiled to death, and in that state it was found by its mother. See what a great misfortune occurred, because the mother was so incautious as to allow the monkey to look on, while she was bathing her child, although she committed no crime, nor injustice thereby.

The life of the parents is the mirror of the lives of the children.

Christian parents, what is your life, your example, with regard to your children? It is a mirror that they look at daily, since they are always with you, and to it they conform their lives and actions. Yet there is this great difference: The mirror does not work any real change in the person who looks at it. The distortion, the red or green color, exists only in the glass; he who looks at it, remains as he was. And again, if the mirror is without fault, it reflects truly the faults or perfections of a person. The contrary is the case with the lives of parents. As a general rule, children who take notice of them, act well or ill, according to the example given them by the ordinary actions of their father and mother. "They become what they see," [1] may with truth be affirmed of them, as the holy Fathers say of the angels and Saints in Heaven: The Seraphim see in God pure love, and therefore they, too, become burning with love. The Cherubim see clearest of all the knowledge and wisdom of God, and therefore they are all light and knowledge. Of all men who will have the happiness of enjoying God in Heaven, St. John the Evangelist says plainly enough: "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him; because we shall see Him as He is." [2] In the same way, almost, children will generally be what

[1] Fiunt quod vident.

[2] Charissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus, et nondum apparuit, quid erimus. Scimus quoniam cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus: quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est.—I. John iii. 2.

they see in their parents. If they see in them vanity, pride, avarice, impurity, vindictiveness, laziness, and sloth in the service of God, "they shall become what they see."[1] If they see in them Christian humility, modesty, meekness, chastity, the fear and love of God, zeal and piety, and a love of all virtue, "they shall become what they see." They will have the same inclinations and desires that they see reflected in those mirrors. The holy Bishop Salvianus has reason to say, in speaking of children: "Before they get possession of their parents' property, they have their parents themselves in their habits and manners."[2] They do not yet enjoy the wealth of their father and mother, but they have their piety or wickedness.

Proved by other similes.

St. Paul says, writing to the Romans: "For if the first fruit be holy, so is the lump also; and if the root be holy, so are the branches."[3] Of which Theodorus says: "As the lump must be like the first fruit, and the branches like the root, so must children be like their parents."[4] Hence, just as bad yeast spoils the bread that is made with it, and as a rotten root infects the branch that grows from it, so it would be an unusual thing if wicked parents had not wicked children.

We read in the First Book of Kings that Saul was once amongst the prophets. "And all that had known him yesterday, and the day before, seeing that he was with the prophets and prophesied, said to each other: What is this that hath happened to the son of Cis? And one answered another saying: And who is his father?"[5] As if they meant: We have never heard that his father could prophecy; how, then, can the son have such favor with God, that he is amongst the prophets? The same Saul, when he saw the youthful David fighting in single combat against the gigantic Philistine, and conquering him with a sling, could not but express his admiration at such great valor, and asked Abner, the captain of the army: "Of what family is this young man descended?" And again: "Inquire thou whose son this young man is." And at last Saul himself asked David: "Young man, of what family art thou?"[6] My dear brethren, why was

[1] Fiunt quod vident.

[2] Priusquam in domino suo habere incipiant res paternas, habent in animis ipsos patres.

[3] Quod si delibatio sancta est, et massa: et si radix sancta, et rami.—Rom. xi. 16.

[4] Necesse est, fermento massam et radici ramos assimilari; sic parentibus filios.

[5] Videntes autem omnes, qui noverant eum heri et nudiustertius, quod esset cum prophetis, et prophetaret, dixerunt ad invicem: Quænam res accidit filio Cis? Responditque alius ad alterum dicens: et quis pater ejus?—I. Kings x. 11, 12.

[6] De qua stirpe descendit hic adolescens? . . . . Interroga tu, cujus filius sit iste puer? . . . . De qua progenie es, o adolescens?—Ibid. xvii. 55, 56, 58.

Saul so anxious to know who was David's father? He had often seen him before, and had had him with himself. Because, as a learned writer says, he was fully persuaded that such heroic courage did not come from nature, but from the bravery of the young man's parents. For a close resemblance is, generally speaking, to be found between the conduct of parents and that of their children.

Children are like monkeys and imitate all they see in their parents.

Christian parents, what are your children like, especially when they are still young, and are living under your authority? They are like monkeys that imitate everything they see; like parrots, that repeat whatever they hear; like little birds, that sing whatever tune they are taught. Such is your daily experience with your own little daughters, who dress their dolls, and carry them about, and put them to sleep in the cradle; with your own little sons, who ride on a stick, etc. The former learn from their own mothers, or from the nurse, the latter from their fathers. Listen, now, to a far more terrible imitation than the one I told you already about the monkey.

Further explanation of the force of example, especially of that of parents with children.

The same Ælianus tells us that Macareus, a faithless and wicked man, prompted by avarice, cut the throat of a traveller while the latter was asleep, in order to get possession of his money, and this crime he committed in presence of his two sons, but without any scruple or anxiety on that account; for he thought to himself: They are too young and innocent, they do not understand what I am doing. But he was very much mistaken. A short time afterwards these two innocent little brothers were playing together. Come, said one to the other, let us do what father did lately to the strange man, when he rubbed the knife on his throat; you will be the man, said the elder, and I will be father. They both agreed, thinking there was nothing wrong. The younger child laid himself down on the bed, and in his childish way, pretended to be asleep; the other took up the very same knife that his father had used to commit the crime, and struck it with such force, although he knew not what he was doing, into his brother's neck, that the latter was killed on the spot. The mother, hearing the cries of her surviving son, as he saw his brother lying dead, came into the room, and in her frenzy, killed him too. The father, hearing of what had happened, killed his wife, and was himself caught by the authorities and executed. Christian parents, what do you think of this tragedy? You, I mean, in particular, who are not afraid nor ashamed to do and say in presence of your children things that they should never hear nor

see, and those things you do and say under the empty excuse that the children are still too young and innocent to understand them. Take a sensible view of the case. If the example of their father induced those children to do a thing that could give them no pleasure, and thus to commit a murder, which is apt to terrify and shock every one, how great must not the influence of the parents' example then be, in things that are pleasing and flattering to our corrupt nature, so that we are already inclined to them of our own accord, and drawn to them violently by a natural impulse ?

The proverb says, very truly, that the example of others, and what we see them do, impels us[1] with a gentle violence to imitate them, and that is the case in evil much more than in good things. Now, if it is true that we easily imitate what we see in others, even though they are strangers to us, how much more powerful will not the example of parents be with their own children, since God has given them such great authority and influence over the minds of the latter, that there is nothing like it in the world? "Father and mother," says the wise Philo, "are visible deities in the eyes of their children, who generally imagine that there can be no one better, or more excellent, than their parents. They sometimes hear of kings and rulers, but do not think as much of their authority as they do of that of their father and mother, because they do not see the former, while they have the latter constantly before their eyes. This respect and reverence, coupled with the ignorance of childhood, which makes it so difficult at first to distinguish between good and evil, make it impossible for children to find fault with, or condemn anything their parents do. They think that their father and mother cannot do wrong, and they look upon their very vices as virtues deserving of praise, so that they imagine the best thing they can do is to imitate something they have seen in their parents. St. Augustine tells us of a certain heathen who, seeing a picture representing the amours of the god Jupiter, exclaimed: "Has the great Jupiter done such things, and must I abstain from them, I who am only a miserable mortal?"[2] So do boys and girls think in their childhood: My father, who is a learned and clever man, speaks, acts, and lives in such a manner. My mother, who is so experienced, acts thus; how can I, who am but a child, hope to do better? In a word, children are naturally so apt to imitate their parents,

[1] Exempla trahunt. [2] Ego homunico non hoc faciam ?

that Christ our Lord made use of no other proof to convince the wicked Jews that they were not real children of Abraham, than to reproach them for not doing the works of Abraham: "If you be the children of Abraham," He said, "do the works of Abraham!"[1] And since they did the works of the devil, He calls them children of the devil: "You are of your father, the devil."[2] Learn from this, Christian parents, what a powerful influence your bad or good example has to corrupt your children, or to lead them on to virtue.

Therefore it is no wonder that they act and speak like their parents.

No father, therefore, can be surprised if his sons are given to lying and cheating, to swearing and cursing, to drinking and gambling, if he himself speaks and acts so as to set them an example of these vices. No mother should be astonished if her daughters are too free in their manner, vain and frivolous, when her own conduct is not as it should be. It is to no purpose that parents often exclaim, when their children do or say anything wrong: My goodness, where did the child learn that? Not from me, surely! By all means it is from you. You have taught it, not by express words, but by your bad example. The child has heard or seen it before from his father. How could he help learning it, since it was taught in such an impressive manner, by the living example of his parents, that he picked it up very quickly and retains it in his memory? You will never hear a child speak French if his parents and all the servants of the house speak another language.

Proved by an example.

You all know, my dear brethren, without doubt, what happened to the little boy in Liege. The innocent child had lost its way in the streets, and of course, as children do, commenced to cry. One of the citizens, who did not know the child, was moved with pity and wished to help him; so he went up to him and asked him to whom he belonged. To the devil, answered the child. What is your father's name? The devil. Your mother's? The devil's wife. Your own? The devil's child. What is the name of the house in which you live? The devil's house. The man hardly knew what to think, he was so astonished. He took the weeping child by the hand, and brought him from one street to another, until at last he came to where the child's parents lived. The mother was standing at the door, and as soon as she saw her little son, she cried out: You child of the devil, where have you been so long? Come in

[1] Si filii Abrahæ estis, opera Abrahæ facite.—John viii. 39.
[2] Vos ex patre diabolo estis.—Ibid. 44.

here at once! The father, hearing the noise, came out and said to his wife: You devilish woman, what are you shouting at now? Ah, ha, thought the man, as he went away silently; now I know what sort of a language is spoken in that house, and I am not surprised that the innocent child knew no other.

Proved also by daily experience.

Oh, how many children there are nowadays in Catholic families who are far more apt to call upon the demon, than upon their Father in Heaven! How could it be otherwise? They hear nothing else at home; it is the language that their father and mother speak. Oh, woe to you, parents, who thus accustom yourselves to curse and swear! If it were no sin even on any other account, it would be a grievous and terrible one by the sole fact that you give your children and servants a very bad example, so that they learn to speak the same horrible language. How many a son knows how to drink to excess before he learns to read and write! And how could it be otherwise? he is only following his father's example. How many a daughter knows more about playing cards and cheating, than about saying her beads! How many a one can sit for two hours before her looking-glass, but not one in the Church; or spend her time in frivolity with persons of the opposite sex, instead of saying her morning and evening prayers; or please the devil by giving scandal through immodesty in dress, rather than do the will of God by mortifying her eyes and her sensuality by Christian modesty and self-denial! How could it be otherwise? her mother is just the same. How many still innocent children know how to speak of impure and unbecoming things, even before they are capable of commiting sin, although they will afterwards commit sins enough! How can it be otherwise? they have seen these things and heard them from their imprudent parents. Woe to you again, parents, who in any way whatever give bad example to your children! If it were better for him who gives scandal, even to a stranger, to have a mill-stone tied about his neck, and to be cast into the depths of the sea, what do a father and mother deserve, who give scandal to their own children, and lead them into sin by their bad example?

Thus parents who lead bad lives, not only sin themselves, but destroy

Ah, how much reason had not St. Jerome to warn a mother with regard to her little daughter (and all parents should take this warning to themselves): "Your child should see nothing in you, nor in her father, which she would sin by imitating."[1] Parents, when in presence of your children, you should tremble

[1] Nihil in te et in patre suo videat, quod si fecerit, peccet.

many other souls.

with fear lest you say or do anything that they could not say nor do without sin! Never forget that when you do wrong at home, you not only injure your own souls and offend God, but you also bring many other souls into the same sin and to spiritual death, by your example. The Prophet David says: "You shall fall like one of the princes."[1] Mark this, Christian parents; when you fall into sin, you fall like one of the princes. How so? why like a prince? Because if a tall tree falls, its branches and boughs fall with it. If I hear that a general is killed in battle, I know, without further questioning, that a number of common soldiers have also lost their lives. "Like one of the princes;" such is your fall also, oh, parents. When you sin in presence of your children, or so that they can know that you have sinned, you fall as the general and head of the household, that is to say, not alone, for you also involve in your destruction those who are subject to you. To make those latter quarrelsome, vindictive, proud, dishonest, unchaste, and impious, it is not necessary to instruct them in such things, nor to urge them thereto by threats and punishment. No; for if you are given to these vices, and your children notice that, they will soon follow your example of their own accord.

Explained by a simile.

An assassin once wished to kill a certain nobleman; and how do you think he managed it? By powder and ball, or dagger, or sword, the means that are generally made use of to commit such a crime? Not at all. And what then did he do? He made a poisonous torch, and used it to light the nobleman home one night. The latter, following him, breathed the poisonous smoke from the torch; it affected his heart and he died soon after. I certainly do not believe that amongst Christian parents there is a father or mother so cruel as deliberately to attempt the spiritual murder of their children, and thus to drag them down to eternal death, by giving them bad example; yet they do so in reality, they carry such a poisonous torch before them, that their children, who inhale its fumes, must die a spiritual death. And what is still more to be deplored, not only does the bad example of parents hurt their own children, but its bad effects are often continued down to their children's children, and to all their posterity, who are thus infected with the contagion of bad example. For, as your sons and daughters are, oh, parents, so will their children also be, and these latter will propagate still farther the evil influence of the bad example of their own parents; so

[1] Sicut unus de principibus cadetis.—Ps. lxxxi. 7.

that there will be an almost endless series of sins descending from one generation to another, like an inheritance.

Of which God complains.

And it is that of which an angry God complains by the Prophet Osee: "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant,"[1] and violated my commands. Such, says the Glossa, is the complaint of God against parents who lead vicious lives. But why is the sin of parents compared to that of Adam? Probably because they are as ungrateful as Adam by sinning against God, who has bestowed countless benefits on them. Such is the reason given by St. Jerome; but there is still another. Mark the words that God spoke: "They, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant."[2] Now, what covenant did God make with Adam? It consisted in this, that the consequence of Adam's obedience in observing the divine command, or of his disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit, should descend to all his children and their posterity. So that the sin of parents is likened to his in this, that as the latter, in virtue of the covenant made by God, has descended on all Adam's posterity, so also the former, by the influence of the parents' bad example, is inherited by their children and by their children's children, who in their turn follow the example of their father and mother.

And the sins of parents will be punished in their children.

It is in this sense we must understand the terrible threat of the Lord in the Book of Exodus: "I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."[3] And how is that? Does the just and merciful God punish innocent children for the sins of their forefathers? Was it their fault if their parents led bad lives? Does not the same Lord say clearly and plainly enough by the Prophet Ezechiel: "What is the meaning that you use among you this parable as a proverb in the land of Israel, saying: the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the teeth of the children are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, this parable shall be no more to you a proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine. The soul that sinneth, the same shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father."[4]

[1] Ipsi autem sicut Adam transgressi sunt pactum.—Osee vi. 7.

[2] Sicut Adam transgressi sunt pactum.

[3] Ego sum Dominus Deus tuus, fortis, zelotes, visitans iniquitatem patrum in filios, in tertiam et quartam generationem eorum, qui oderunt me.—Exod. xx. 5.

[4] Quid est quod inter vos parabolam vertitis in proverbium istud in terra Israel, dicentes: patres comederunt uvam acerbam, et dentes filiorum obstupescunt? Vivo ego, dicit Dominus Deus si erit ultra vobis parabola hæc in proverbium in Israel. Ecce, omnes animæ meæ sunt, ut anima patris, ita et anima filii mea est. Anima, quæ peccaverit, ipsa morietur; filius non portabit iniquitatem patris.—Ezech. xviii. 2, 3, 4, 20.

And again He says by St. Paul: "Every one shall bear his own burden."[1] What, then, is the meaning of the words: "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers, to the third and fourth generation"?[2] St. Jerome, writing of the 18th chapter of Ezechiel, explains these words by saying: "Because the children are imitators of their parents,"[3] and commit sin after the example of their parents. Besides, one of the most terrible punishments that God inflicts upon parents who lead vicious lives, is that He generally permits their children and children's children to fall into the same vices. He says expressly by the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "The children of sinners become children of abominations."[4] And in the Book of Wisdom: "But the wicked shall be punished according to their own devices. Their hope is vain, and their labors without fruit, and their works unprofitable; their children wicked, their offspring is cursed."[5]

Therefore, the pious life of the parents is the best means of bringing up children well.

From all this you may see, Christian parents, how necessary it is, if you wish to do your duty, and to bring up your children in a Christian manner for their last end, that you give them a good, Christian, and holy example. Do you wish them to be pious and to go to Heaven? Then the first thing you have to do, your first thought must be how you yourselves are to lead holy lives, and to advance on the right path to Heaven, so as, in all your actions, to give them an example of how they ought to live. The Apostle says: "If the root be holy, so are the branches."[6] We see and experience that in many families, in which from one generation to another, holy souls are found who give an example of a good, pious, and conscientious life to their descendants.

If all parents lived thus, the whole world would be pious and holy.

Oh, if I could persuade all parents to lead good and Christian lives, and to induce their children to imitate them, what a great change there would be for the better, what a different appearance the whole of Christendom would present in a very short time! The Church, I have no doubt, would be provided with pious priests, the religious orders with holy members, spiritual and secular employments with worthy officials, and all households with pious souls; nay, the whole world would become holy, and would be an earthly paradise, in which God alone would be

[1] Unusquisque onus suum portabit.—Gal. vi. 5.
[2] Visitans iniquitatem patrum in tertiam et quartam generationem.
[3] Quia filii patrum exierunt æmulatores.
[4] Filii abominationum fiunt filii peccatorum.—Eccl. xli. 8.
[5] Impii autem secundum quæ cogitaverunt, correptionem habebant. Vacua est spes illorum, et labores sine fructu, et inutilia opera eorum; et nequissimi filii eorum, maledicta creatura eorum.—Sap. iii. 10-13.
[6] Si radix sancta et rami.

sought, loved, praised, and blessed! Such was long ago the judgment of the wisest Fathers of the Church, assembled in the Council of Trent. After having consulted together for a long time as to the best means of arousing tepid Christians, and removing the abuses and evil customs that had crept in amongst them, they finally came to the conclusion that the best means to that end was the amendment of the lives of parents and the proper training of children.

Exhortation to parents to begin, or continue to live piously.

Therefore, you fathers and mothers who are here present, continue, or if you have hitherto been wanting herein, begin, at least to do your share of the work! Remember that the salvation of so many of your descendants depends on your living piously; hence, before every other domestic care, see that you serve God justly and faithfully, and that you encourage your children to do the same, by your example. In that way, when you are no longer on earth, you will leave souls there, after you, who will (oh, what a consolation for you!) serve God, love Him and praise Him for you, and their service, love, and praise will be imputed to your training and example. The Lord will rejoice even now on your account; as He formerly did on account of the Patriarch Abraham. He says: "Can I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? For I know that he will command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and do judgment and justice."[1] What? He will command his household after him? How can he command when he will be no longer on earth? Will he perhaps rise from the dead to lead his descendants on the way of the Lord? No, says the learned Pererius; the Lord God foresaw that the holy example, by which Abraham instructed his children to justice, would be continued amongst their descendants, who would follow the same example, and keep it up in their families; and that was the reason why God rejoiced and praised Abraham. Christian parents, you should do the same. If you give your children an example of virtue in this life, they will follow it, and they will follow you also into eternity, where you will all see, love, and praise your God in the everlasting joys of Heaven. Amen.

[1] Num celare potero Abraham, quæ gesturus sum. Scio enim, quod præcepturus sit filiis suis, et domui suæ post se, ut custodiant viam Domini, et faciant judicium et justitiam.—Gen. xviii. 17, 19.

FORTY-SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE NECESSITY OF PARENTS GIVING GOOD EXAMPLE TO THEIR CHILDREN.

Subject.

Unless parents lead pious lives and give good example, all their efforts to train up their children in a Christian manner, will come to nothing.—*Preached on the twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Cujus est imago hæc?—Matth. xxii. 20.
"Whose image is this?"

Introduction.

From the image we may learn the appearance of a person whom it represents. In to-day's Gospel, Christ, in order to show the Jews to whom they should pay tribute, asked them to bring Him a piece of money: "Show Me the coin of the tribute,"[1] and then He asked: "Whose image is this?"[2] "They say to Him: Cæsar's."[3] Therefore, answered the Saviour, since the image represents Cæsar, it proves clearly enough to whom the tribute is to be paid. "Give, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's."[4] My dear brethren, a child is called, "the image of his father,"[5] so that if I see a son or a daughter, and consider their character, I have nothing more to do, in order to know of what kind their father or mother are, than to ask: "Whose image is this?" Who is the father of this son? Who is the mother of this daughter? And when I hear their names, although I may not be personally acquainted with them, yet I can form a sufficiently accurate judgment of their manner of life, so as to know whether they are pious or not, according as I have seen whether the children are good or bad. For as a general rule, the character of the parents is reflected in the children, these latter being the images of the former, and generally speak-

[1] Ostendite mihi numisma census.—Matth. xxii. 19. [2] Cujus est imago hæc?
[3] Dicunt ei: Cæsaris.—Ibid. 21. [4] Reddite ergo quæ sunt Cæsaris, Cæsari.—Ibid.
[5] Imago patris.

ing, imitating their example. Therefore, people say of the pious son or daughter of wicked parents: Oh, that child is not at all like its parents; and the same thing is true of a wicked child whose father and mother are good and pious. Christian parents, you may again conclude from this how important it is for you to give your children a good and holy example. I have shown in the last sermon that the pious lives and good example of the parents is the best means of bringing up children well. I shall now prove that—

Plan of Discourse.

Unless parents lead pious lives and give good example, all their efforts to train up their children in a Christian manner will come to nothing, or will do very little good. Such is the whole subject. Therefore, parents, I repeat, live piously, if you wish to bring up pious children, and to lead them to Heaven!

Effect this in them by Thy grace, oh, Almighty God, through the intercession of the Mother of Thy Son, and the holy angels guardian.

Many things are required for the earth to bring forth good fruits, principally sunlight.

There are many things required for a field to produce good fruits: First, the ground must be ploughed, then it must be freed from weeds, thistles, thorns, and stones, and unless this is done, a crop cannot be expected. The seed must also be planted in the ground that is thus prepared to receive it. After the sin of Adam, the earth lost its power of producing good fruits of itself. In the third place, the seed must be harrowed in, and protected from birds, and therefore scarecrows are generally put up in the fields to keep the birds off. All these things are necessary, but they are not yet sufficient to insure a good crop; for if the light of the sun and moon are wanting, all the former preparations are of no avail. The sun, with its light and heat, the moon, with its wonderful influence, must assist the decaying seed to shoot forth and grow. If the sun and moon were taken away, the whole earth, no matter how much it is ploughed and sown, would be a desert. Furthermore, the condition of the earth depends on that of the sun: if the latter is cool, so is the earth; if it is cold or hot, so also is the earth; and there you have a sketch of my subject that you may easily understand, my dear brethren.

Parents must use various

Now, the fruits that parents, who desire to train up their children for their last end, expect and wish the latter to bring

means for their children to produce good fruit.

forth, are piety and good works, by which all who come to the use of reason must gain Heaven. Such, too, is the comparison that Jesus Christ Himself uses in the Gospel: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire."[1] Now, that fruits of this kind may grow in children, many different means are required, of which we have spoken already, namely, good instruction, constant vigilance, and parental correction. Correction prepares the tender minds of children, as the plough does the ground, and purifies them from thistles, weeds, and thorns; that is, it corrects their present evil propensities, and guards against future ones. Good instruction plants the seed, according to the words of Christ: "The seed is the Word of God,"[2] whereby parents continually instruct and exhort their children to good. By constant vigilance over the actions of children, the birds of prey that seek their souls are prevented from carrying off the good seed, and the children themselves are saved from the dangerous occasions of sin. All these things are good and necessary to a Christian training.

But they are of little use, if the good example of the parents is wanting.

But they help little or nothing to the sanctification of children, if the sun and moon do not shed their light, and bring forth fruits of eternal life. Nor do I speak here of the light of God's grace, for as a matter of course, no good can be produced in us without that. Without God's help, no one is capable of doing a good work that is meritorious of Heaven; but God is never wanting in His part of the work. Fathers, mothers, you are the sun and moon to your children, by the example you give them. The patriarch Joseph says of his dream: "I saw in a dream, as it were, the sun and the moon worshipping me."[3] It is not necessary for us, my dear brethren, to seek another interpretation of these words, besides that which Jacob gives: How, my son, he asks with evident indignation, what are you thinking of? "Shall I and thy mother worship thee upon the earth?"[4] That vision of Joseph, therefore, shows that the father is the sun, and the mother the moon in the house; and to them in particular does Christ say: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven,"[5]

[1] Omnis arbor, quæ non facit fructum bonum, excidetur, et in ignem mittetur.—Matth. vii. 19.

[2] Semen est Verbum Dei.—Luke viii. 11.

[3] Vidi per somnium, quasi solem et lunam.....adorare me.—Gen. xxxvii. 9.

[4] Num ego et mater tua adorabimus te super terram?—Ibid. 10.

[5] Sic luceat lux vestra coram hominibus, ut videant opera vestra bona, et glorificem Patrem vestrum, qui in cœlis est.—Matth. v. 16.

and they, especially, who are daily under your training, should see that light, in order to be encouraged to do good works. If the sun and moon are eclipsed, the whole earth is in darkness: if the father and mother do not give forth the light of virtue, piety, and the fear of God, the minds of the children are cold and tepid in the divine service. In a word, if the good example of the parents is wanting, all other means of rearing up their children in a Christian manner will be of little or no use. Let us now consider that more in detail.

First, good teaching is of no use without example, because children follow what they see rather than what they hear.

In the first place, although it is true that good instruction does wonders for the salvation of children, and if it is wanting, they live and die in ignorance of many divine truths, and of course in the sins that spring from this ignorance, yet, I ask, how could a father, or mother, hope to instruct others in good, to teach and exhort them to lead Christian lives, if they themselves do not know how to live well and as Christians ought? "No one gives what he has not,"[1] is a saying well known in the schools. If I have nothing good myself, I can give nothing good to others. Now, suppose that those parents, who do not lead a good life, spend a long time every day in instructing their children in the truths of salvation. The children see that their father and mother do not practise as they preach; how then can their teaching have any effect, since they contradict it by their example? Which of the two are the children most likely to follow? Ah, it is easy to talk, but what enters by the eyes makes a far deeper impression on the heart, than what goes in by the ears, and we are far more apt to do what we see others doing, than what they command us to do. Solomon, the wisest of men, had written many holy books, in which he left most beautiful instructions to his children, but Roboam, his son, was far more influenced by his father's example, than by his teaching. He followed the latter's bad example, and not his instructions.

Because teaching makes no impression when the example of parents is wanting.

Besides, what impression can mere teaching make on children? They could answer their parents, if not in words, at least in thought, as the envious Jews said to the blind man in the synagogue, when he wished them to become disciples of Christ: "Thou wast wholly born in sins, and dost thou teach us?"[2] So also might the children say: Father, mother, you spend your lives in committing sin, and do you wish to teach us to be good, and to live piously? You treat each other sometimes like cat

[1] Nemo dat, quod non habet.
[2] In peccatis natus es totus, et tu doces nos?—John ix. 34.

and dog—you live in discord, quarrelling, and strife. You abuse and threaten, curse and swear at each other, and do you think you can teach us[1] to practise meekness, to live in peace, to yield to each other, to be patient and to bear with each other's defects and faults according to the teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? You tell us that children who curse will not go to Heaven; but we hear you every day, at meal-times, backbiting your neighbors, speaking uncharitably of the faults of the absent, and arranging how you are to pay off some one for an injury he has inflicted on you. And do you wish to persuade us that we must consider our own faults, and put the best interpretation on the actions of others, that we must never speak ill of others, that we must forgive injuries as the Christian law teaches, and love those who hate us, and do good to those who persecute us? Father, we often see you coming home intoxicated, and will you now exhort us to be temperate and sober? Mother, we know that you are too extravagant in dress, too free in company, and too idle, since you spend the whole day in sleeping, drinking, eating, standing at the door or the window, paying and receiving visits, etc.; how, then, can you teach us to be modest, reserved, and humble, to avoid the society of persons of the opposite sex, and to make the best use of our precious time, to rise early in the morning, and to retire at a proper hour in the evening? Parents, we see in you few signs of piety, or of the fear and love of God, and on the contrary, a great desire for earthly things, a great neglect of morning and evening prayer, and very little desire to hear the Word of God. And do you think you can teach us to be devout, to attend sermon and catechism on all Sundays and holy-days—a thing that you never do—to say our morning prayers and make our evening examen of conscience on our knees? How does your teaching correspond with your practice? Children, God forbid that you should ever dare to make such reproaches to your parents! Even from wicked teachers, and much more from your father and mother, although they may not give you good example, you must take their instructions and exhortations to good, for your souls' sake, not otherwise than if they came from the lips of Christ Himself. But you, parents, see whether your children have not reason to reproach you, at least in their own minds, when they have sense enough to see that your conduct is not what it should be. If they cannot see that, what good will your teaching do them? They will think: What father and mother

[1] Et tu doces nos?

say is not true; they do not mean it seriously; it cannot be wicked to do the things they warn us against, or they would not do them themselves. The good they exhort us to cannot be much or they would do it too, etc. No; teaching without example is of little or no use.

Parents must show them what they teach, like Christ.

Jesus Christ, although He is the Holy of holies, and the Supreme Law-giver, who is bound by no law, did not begin to teach until He had first given a holy example of His doctrine in Himself: "And Jesus began to do and to teach,"[1] is written of Him when He commenced His public preaching during the last three years of His mortal life. Mark these words: doing goes first, and preaching comes next. (Alas, my dear Saviour, whenever I think of those words, I am overwhelmed with shame, and must ask myself, how can I teach others what I fulfil so badly? But, all the more thanks to Thee, my God, even because Thou hast chosen me, miserable as I am, as Thy instrument in this office of preaching! This thought should be a constant spur to me, and woe to me if I do not labor diligently to observe what I preach to others in Thy Name and with Thy inspiration!) I speak again to you, Christian parents: If your teaching is to do your children any good, and to help them to save their souls, you must give them good example. Whenever you speak of piety, devotion, virtue, or the service of God, you must not be content with merely saying: Son, daughter, or servant, "do this;"[2] but you must say: "Come, let us all do it!"[3] It is not enough to say: Imitate Jesus Christ; you should say with the Apostle: "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ."[4] It is not enough to point out the way to Heaven, and say: Go there. Every wooden finger-post about the country could do as much as that, for it shows the traveller his way, but never stirs from the one spot. Children must be led by the hand. You must act like the mother, or the nurse who teaches the little ones to walk; how does she manage? Come now, my child, she says, go on. But she is not satisfied with that alone, for if she were, the child would fall down after taking one or two steps. She takes it by the hand and walks along with it, step by step. See, she says, that is the way to walk. That was the way in which St. Monica taught her son Augustine to leave the path of error and to embrace the truth, as the latter tells us: "She watered her words with her tears, and strengthened them by her example."[5] In short, good example

[1] Incepit Jesus facere et docere.—Acts. i. 1. [2] Fac! [3] Faciamus!
[4] Imitatores mei estote, sicut et ego Christi.—I. Cor. xi. 1.
[5] Verba sua rigabat lachrymis, nutriebat exemplis.

alone, without words, can do much with children, but good words, without example, are of no use.

Vigilance helps little, because children lose all shame of evil-doing, if their parents give bad example.

Another means necessary to bring up children in a Christian manner, consists in the parents being watchful over all their actions. It is true that this vigilance can prevent many sins that the children would in all likelihood commit, if they were not watched over; but what good can it do, if the parents had a hundred eyes, and kept them always open, without good example? For, how is it that the watchful eye of the parent keeps the child from sin? That comes from a natural inborn shame that prevents us from doing what is wrong or unbecoming in the presence of others, and that shame is very powerful with children, on account of the reverence and respect that God has inspired them with for their parents. Therefore, there is no child so impudent as to dare to act improperly in presence of its father, or mother. But this shame and reverence must of necessity disappear, when the children see and know that their parents do wrong. They think, then: Oh, I need not be ashamed to do what my parents do, and to behave as they behave. Parents, you should rather be ashamed in your hearts, when you think of your duty of looking after your children, and you should ask yourselves: How can I dare to reprove them for what my own conscience tells me I am guilty of?

Vigilance averts the danger of sin, but parents, by bad example, place their children in that danger.

Besides, vigilance is required of parents, principally, that they may prevent their children from hearing or seeing anything that would scandalize them, from going into the danger of sin, and from being corrupted and made vicious by bad company. Oh, certainly, this care and watchfulness are very necessary! Parents, you should almost lock up your children in a box, to keep them from going about wherever they please. There are, alas, so many traitors and deceivers almost everywhere, nowadays, that one cannot be careful enough, and very often one finds danger to the soul, where it ought least of all to be feared. But tell me now, you parents who lead bad lives, and give your sons and daughters bad example, what use is it for you to prevent your children from hearing or seeing anything scandalous, when you yourselves are a stumbling-block in their way every day at home, when they remark in your lives and conduct, that are always before their eyes, things that must necessarily be an occasion of scandal to them? What good is it for you to save your children from other dangers of sin outside, when they find dangers enough at home, in the conduct of their own father and mother? What good is

it to keep your children from bad company, if you yourselves betray them, by your wicked example, ruin their innocence, and lead them on to evil? Are the dangers that come from their parents less to be dreaded, than those that come from strangers, or should they not rather be more feared, since they are much more powerful? No! be as watchful as you like over the actions of your children, but if you do not give them good example, your vigilance is useless.

Even correction, without good example, is of no use.

The third and last necessary means of bringing up children well, consists in parental correction and chastisement of the children's faults, so that they may be induced to repent, and to avoid such faults in future. Oh, if many fathers and mothers had not such a blind, foolish, and senseless love, or to speak better, such a hatred and dislike for their children, that they overlook all the faults of the latter, lest, as they say themselves, they should cause the dear children pain, then most children would not be so ill brought up! But now I ask for the last time: You fathers and mothers who do not give good example, how can you dare to punish, in your children, a vice that you and they know you are yourselves subject to, so that you are as deserving of punishment as they are? Who would not laugh at a courtier, who finding his prince's servants talking and laughing before their master's door, would cry out at the top of his voice: Be quiet, the prince is asleep, and you must not awake him! Who, I say, would not laugh at such conduct? In the same way, Christian parents, do you not think that your sons and daughters secretly laugh at you, when you punish them for a fault, or a moral disease, that they are well aware you suffer from also? With reason does St. Augustine say: "He can with justice correct others who has nothing to be corrected in himself."[1] At least he should be free from the vice that he punishes in others, or else his guilt must not be known, for otherwise one could say to him: "Physician, heal thyself,"[2] before you undertake to cure others. Or else one might say of him what the Jews said of Jesus Christ, when they were mocking at, and blaspheming Him as He hung on the cross: "He saved others, Himself He cannot save."[3] Or the same reproach might be made to him which Christ addressed to the envious Pharisees: "Hypocrite, cast first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote from thy

[1] Ille justus reprehensor est, qui non habet, quod in illo reprehendatur.
[2] Medice, cura teipsum.—Luke iv. 23.
[3] Alios salvos fecit, seipsum non potest salvum facere.—Matth. xxvii. 42.

brother's eye."[1] Or else the words might be applied to him, which our Lord addressed to the Pharisees, when they wished to stone the woman taken in adultery: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."[2] In the same way, father, or mother, if you see that your children have done wrong, punish them. It is right and just to do so, it is even an obligation that your office as parents imposes on you. But if you wish the punishment to do good, you must see that you are not laboring under the same fault; for otherwise your children, or at all events, your conscience, could cry out to you: Hypocrite, punish yourself! Hence, I must often laugh at the complaints of parents who do not lead good lives: I do not know, they say, what to do with my child. I cannot get him to be pious, he is always wilful and obstinate; no matter what I say to him, he is no better. I threaten and beat him, but all to no purpose; he is just the same as before. What are you saying? That all your punishing is of no use? That you see no sign of improvement in your child? I quite believe you! But where did you begin the correction? Was it with yourself? Did you first commence to be pious and devout? If not, I am not surprised that your child is not inclined to piety and devotion, and that all your chastising effects nothing.

Shown by an example.

The men of the city of Jericho came once to the Prophet Eliseus to beseech him to help them, as they were suffering a great deal for the want of sweet water, as we read in the 2d chapter of the Fourth Book of Kings. They said: "Behold, the situation of this city is very good, as thou, my lord, seest; but the waters are very bad, and the ground barren."[3] Eliseus answered: "Bring me a new vessel, and put salt into it." And then, "he went out to the spring of the waters, and cast the salt into it, and said: Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters, and there shall be no more in them death or barrenness. And the waters were healed unto this day."[4] Why did Eliseus cast salt into the fountain, and not into the stream? Because all the bitterness came from the fountain, so that when it was once purified, all the water that came from it was sweet. The Glossa of Father Cornelius à Lapide re-

[1] Hypocrita, ejice primum, trabem de oculo tuo, et tunc perspicies, ut educas festucam de oculo fratris tui.—Luke vi. 42.

[2] Qui sine peccato est vestrum, primus in illam lapidem mittat.—John viii. 7.

[3] Ecce, habitatio civitatis hujus optima est, sicut tu ipse, domine, perspicis: sed aquæ pessimæ sunt, et terra sterilis.—IV. Kings ii. 19.

[4] Afferte mihi vas novum, et mittite in illud sal.....Egressus ad fontem aquarum, misit in illum sal, et ait: Hæc dicit Dominus: Sanavi aquas has, et non erit ultra in eis mors neque sterilitas. Sanatæ sunt ergo aquæ usque in diem hanc.—Ibid. 20–22.

marks on this passage, aptly enough for my subject: "As water comes from the fountain, so do children come from their parents."[1] If the spring is worthless, the water is no good; so that if children are to be corrected, the parents must first correct themselves. Once the father and mother begin to lead pious lives, the children will follow their example, and become spiritually healthy and pious, too. You may learn from this, Christian parents, that all your instructions, and vigilance, and correction, and every other means you may use to train up your children in a Christian manner, are of no use unless you live piously, and give them good example.

Therefore, parents must give their children good example. Proved by a fable

I conclude this part with a well-known fable: The crabs once held a council together, to see if they could manage to improve on their way of walking. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves, said one: whenever any one is unfortunate in business, people say of him: He is going backward, like a crab. We must not allow people to speak of us in that way. I know what we must do, said one of the oldest crabs; we are now too old to change, and are too much accustomed to our way of walking, so that it would be very difficult for us to alter it; but we must issue a general order, obliging all to teach the young crabs to walk straight before them; in that way we shall no longer be disgraced before the people. The advice seemed good to all, and was at once acted upon. You must now learn how to walk, said an old crab to its young one. But how am I to do it, asked the latter? You must put one foot before the other, was the answer, and move it right out in front of you. See that you do so exactly. Father, go on before me,[2] said the young one, so that I may see how you do it. The old crab began to creep in his usual manner, and the young one followed his example. What are you doing, asked the old one; did I not tell you to walk straight? Father, go on before me, was the answer. Father, show me what to do, I cannot do it otherwise. In a word, the old one had to give up the task, and so all crabs continue to walk as they did before. Christian parents, the meaning of this fable has been sufficiently explained in this and the preceding sermon. Think of it, whenever you give your children good advice or correction. Imagine that your son or daughter is saying to you: Father, mother, go on before me.[3] You tell them not to lie, curse, or swear: father, mother, give me an example of Christian conversation, and show me how to speak. They must not

[1] Sicut aqua ex fonte, ita filii ex parente promanant.
[2] Pater, i præ. [3] Pater i præ; mater i præ.

be idle, and must use their precious time in some suitable employment, with a good intention for the glory of God: father, mother, show us how to do it. They must be humble, modest, devout: father, mother, show us how. They must say their prayers in the morning and make their examen of conscience in the evening on their knees: father, mother, let them see you do it; kneel down with your children, according to the custom in proper Christian families. They must hear Mass daily, assist at the sermon on Sundays and holy-days, and go often to confession and communion: father, mother, go with them; bring your children with you to Mass, sermon, and Holy Communion. They must live piously, that they may go to Heaven: father, mother, live so that you may inherit the kingdom of Heaven with your children.

If they do that, their vigilance and correction will be good.

In that way your instructions and warnings will make an impression on your children, your vigilance will keep them from sin, they will either require no punishment, or when you have to inflict it, it will produce the desired effect, and you will thus train up your children properly. Oh, would that all parents acted thus! How much hell would then lose! how many chosen souls would be gained for Heaven! Oh, God, the Ruler of hearts, Thou who hast redeemed all men by Thy Precious Blood, and who wishest all to come to the knowledge of the truth, and to eternal life, do Thou effect, by Thy powerful grace, what my words, that have likely been lost on the majority of those who heard them, could not do! Impress all parents with the necessity of doing their duty to their children. Thy own honor and glory, that will thus be increased, are concerned therein!

Exhortation to parents to fulfil their duty as it has been explained to them.

And you, Christian parents, whatever you do, see, above all, that you fulfil exactly that great and most important duty of rearing up your children well! That is the earnest prayer of the immortal soul of your children, for their going to Heaven or to hell for all eternity depends on whether you give them a good training, or not. The angels of Heaven make the same request of you, for on you it depends to help them to bring their charges to Heaven. He who gave His life, amid unspeakable torments, for you, and to whom you cannot, therefore, refuse anything, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, asks you to do it, for thereon depends the saving of the souls He has purchased with His Blood, from the infernal serpent, into whose toils they would fall, if you were careless of their training. The heavenly Father Himself asks it of you, for He has given you a share of His authority to this end, that you may give Him back the souls of your children

which He has lent to you, and confided to your care. Your own souls demand it, for if your children are lost through your negligence, you must account for the loss and pay for it.

Therefore, they must pray constantly to God and the Saints, for their children, and that they themselves may fulfil their duty.

Therefore pray daily to the Almighty God, who has promised to give us whatever we ask Him for, and who generally does not bestow His grace without prayer, and it is a great gift of God to be able to rear children well. Pray, I say, daily, for your sons and daughters, that He may govern them by His grace, inspire them with His fear and love, keep them from all sin and all occasions of it, by His holy angels; lead them on the right way to Heaven and keep them on it to the end. Do like holy Job, of whom I have recently told you that he offered sacrifice to God every morning for his children, lest they might have sinned even in thought, without his knowledge. Pray to God often with all your hearts, rather to take your sons and daughters, no matter how much you love them, out of the world, than to allow them to offend Him by a single mortal sin. Never warn, chastise, or correct your children without first offering what you are doing to God, with a pure intention, and with the humble prayer that the correction and punishment may be for His greater honor and glory. Pray daily, in the words with which Jesus Christ recommended His Apostles to His heavenly Father: "Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me; that they may be one, as we also are;"[1] so that they may be Thine and remain Thine forever. Pray every day, also, to the Mother of God, to the holy guardian angels of your children, and to all elect parents who are now with God in Heaven, and you may rest assured that you cannot say a better, more useful, or more necessary prayer, nor one more suited to your state of life. Pray, also, that you yourselves may obtain the grace to fulfil your obligations properly; say: Behold, my Lord and my God, Thou hast placed me in this state, in which my chief duty is to bring up my children so that they may save their souls. Thou hast given me so many children; they belong to Thee; they are only lent to me that I may keep them faithfully for Thee. Ah, my God, Thou knowest my ignorance and weakness; help me with Thy light and grace in this most difficult and important task. Let Thy Holy Spirit inspire me with words to teach my children properly, and to exhort them to good, so that they may always fulfil Thy holy will. Remind me by Thy holy angels,

[1] Pater, serva eos in nomine tuo, quos dedisti mihi, ut sint unum, sicut et nos.—John xvii. 11.

and leave me no rest, so that I may always keep a watchful eye over my children. Give me patience to bear for Thy sake the difficulties and trials I may find in performing this duty. Give me zeal to correct their faults when necessary, in a parental manner, and so as to amend them. Give me a horror for sin and worldly vanity, so that I may not injure the souls of my children by my example, but bring them up so as to be able to give them all, without losing a single one, to Thee, on that day when Thou wilt demand them from me, and that I may thus, along with them, enjoy Thee forever. Thus, Christian parents, should you pray, thus should you act.

And never forget it.

Think often of what you have hitherto heard on this subject. Let it not be with you, as is the case with most people, who go away from a sermon and forget all they have heard, and are not a bit better for it. Nor must you be like those who now and then remember what they heard in a sermon, but still are drawn back to the old courses by the bad example and way of living of worldly people, so that they think: Oh, preachers only want to frighten us; it is not so bad as they make it out. Other people, who are known to be pious, and who wish to go to Heaven, bring up their children in a far different manner to what the preacher advises, etc. Ah, my dear brethren, do not think that I wish to burden your consciences, and make sins where there are none! You may believe firmly that what I have hitherto said to you, is the teaching of the Catholic Church, of the holy Fathers, who have written on the training of children, and of theologians, nay, even of sound reason itself. But that the manners and customs of men are generally opposed to such teaching, is evident from what St. John writes in his First Epistle: "The whole world is seated in wickedness."[1] And from what St. James writes: "Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God."[2] And from what Jesus Christ, the infallible Truth, has said: "For many are called, but few are chosen."[3] These very sermons of mine will one day be the voice of one crying in the wilderness, against those who neglect them. You have heard what we said to you, you have known the truth, but you have not practised it! And against those who do not believe: You have heard the truth, but had

[1] Mundus totus in maligno positus est.—I. John v. 19.

[2] Nescetis, quia amicitia hujus mundi inimica est Dei? Quicumque ergo voluerit amicus esse sæculi hujus, inimicus Dei constituitur.—James iv. 4.

[3] Multi enim sunt vocati, pauci vero electi.—Matth. xxii. 14.

no faith in it. The world and its perverse usages made more impression on you than the infallible Word of God. You preferred to follow the example of the children of the world, rather than to walk in the footsteps of the Saints. They will also cry out against those who did not wish to come to the sermons for fear of being disturbed in conscience, and I know that some remained away on that account: "Who have said to God: Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways."[1] For they were of those of whom David said: "He would not understand that he might do well."[2] Not so, Christian parents, must you act: often call to mind the truths you have heard; forget them not, and live according to them. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Et ipsi observabant eum.—Luke xiv. 1.
"And they watched Him."

Jesus Christ, the Holy of holies, in whose life not the least thing could be found that was not good and holy, yet was not free from the prying eyes of the invidious Pharisees, who watched Him everywhere He went, and whatever He did, in the hope of discovering something that they could find fault with and condemn: "And they watched Him."[3] Christian parents, there are also some who watch you, wherever you go, and whatever you do, not merely outside the house; and no one, no matter how good and innocent he is, can avoid curious eyes and cavilling tongues in our days. But (what is more to my purpose now) you have them also in your own house. And if there was no one else to do so, be assured that your own children will watch you; they will note everything their father and mother do. No matter how young they are, their eyes are sharp enough to see all that you do, and they are like monkeys, that imitate everything they see you doing. Therefore, parents, lead good lives, and be careful, especially before your sons and daughters, if you wish to bring up pious children, and to lead them to Heaven. In the last sermon I proved, etc. —*continues as before.*

[1] Qui dixerunt Deo: Recede a nobis, et scientiam viarum tuarum nolumus.—Job xxi. 14.
[2] Noluit intelligere, ut bene ageret.—Ps. xxxv. 4. [3] Et ipsi observabant eum.

ON THE DUTIES OF PARENTS TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN IN TEMPORAL MATTERS.

FORTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

ON THE DUTY OF FEEDING AND SUPPORTING CHILDREN.

Subject.

1st. Parents are bound to support their children and take the greatest care of their temporal welfare. 2d. Many are not careful enough in this particular, and sin by neglect and omission. —*Preached on the twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Domini, filia mea modo defuncta est; sed veni, impone manum tuam super eam, et vivet.—Matth. ix. 18.

"Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live."

Introduction.

Would that all fathers and mothers had as great a care and interest in the eternal life of the souls of their children, as the ruler in to-day's Gospel showed, and as most parents nowadays have for their children's temporal welfare; if that were the case, many children would be better brought up and would save their souls! Hitherto, my dear brethren, we have seen in detail what the duties of parents are regarding the souls and the salvation of their children; and those duties are the most important of all, and all others must give way to them. But, enough of that for the present, although it never can be preached enough, nor thought

enough of. Let those parents who are careless in the service of God, and who do not often come to sermons, see how they will one day answer to the strict justice of God, for the grievous faults they daily commit in bringing up their children, because they do not come to get instructed in that important duty. They will be told that they could and should have known it. There is still another duty that parents owe their children, with regard to the temporal welfare of the latter, according to which they are bound to support and look after them as well as possible. In this point, too, many great faults are committed. Some care too little, others too much; some sin by defect, others by excess, and both are inexcusable. I will deal with the first in this instruction, and will pr briefly—

Plan of Discourse.

That parents are bound to support their children, and to take the greatest care of their temporal welfare. The first part. Many are not careful enough in this particular, and sin by neglect and omission. The second part. The amendment of this fault, which is the source of many other sins, will be the conclusion.

Help me, by Thy grace, oh, heavenly Father, through the merits of the Mother of Thy Son, and the intercession of the holy angels guardian.

The natural law commands parents to support their children.

Is it worth while to ask, you will think, whether parents are bound to support their children, and to look after their temporal welfare? He who knows what a father or mother is, will see clearly that they are bound to do this. If one were to lose all parental instincts and love for his children, if he were even dead to all human feeling, so that he could have a doubt of this, such a person ought to be sent to learn from the wild beasts what nature itself teaches them of this duty. What desert ever contained a wild beast so cruel as to neglect its young, and to allow them to die of hunger? Lions, bears, wolves, and tigers, that hardly ever leave their caves to appear in the sight of men, are never more fierce, nor daring, than when they have young ones to support. Then, no matter how shy they may be of man otherwise, they are not afraid of the hunter, they attack cattle, and even men who come in their way. Sometimes they go into the villages and go around the stables, looking for something to carry off to feed their young with. It is wonderful to see how the little birds,

when, after long hatching, their young at last come out of the shell, fly to and from their nests the whole day long, bringing food to their young in their beaks, although they themselves may be suffering from hunger, so that during that time they become quite thin. It is wonderful to see how a hen scratches and tears with her beak to feed her chickens. As soon as she finds a grain of corn, she does not eat it herself, although she may be hungry enough, but commences to cackle, until her chickens are all about her, when she gives them the precious morsel, and then she begins to scratch and tear afresh. If a whole handful of corn is thrown to her, she does not touch it until she sees that her chickens are quite satisfied, and cannot eat any more. And that care continues on her part, until they are able to look after themselves, and leave her. In the Holy Scriptures, the Prophet Jeremias mentions only one hind that left her young, because there was no food for it. And therefore the Prophet did not wish even to mention her young, for he says merely: "Yea, the hind also brought forth in the field, and left it, because there was no grass."[1] And what did she leave? Certainly, what she gave birth to. But why does he not say so? Because, as Villa Regius answers, she left it. "That cannot be called a child, which the mother abandons,"[2] and does not support. Mark this, my dear brethren: the light of nature alone is sufficient to teach even unreasoning animals their duty of striving to support their young and feed them as well as they can.

The law of charity also.

Man, endowed with reason, is bound to do this too, not only by the law of nature, but also by the law of charity and justice. The law of charity requires all to help their neighbor who is in extreme necessity, when they can, and to save his life, if he cannot help himself. How much more, then, does it not require parents to have that care for their own flesh and blood, whom they have brought into the world! For, who would be bound to support children, if parents were not? And this is not to be understood merely of little children, and of the parents' obligation to feed and clothe them; but also, according to the same law, the father and mother are bound in conscience to support their children, when the latter are grown up, according to their condition, and to see that they leave them enough to live on decently.

The want of this charity causes many sins.

What a great responsibility parents incur by forgetting the obligations of charity and neglecting this duty! Who does not

[1] Nam et cerva in agro peperit, et reliquit, quia non erat herba.—Jerem. xiv. 5.

[2] Improprium videtur quos dixerat reliquisse, filios nominasse.

know, by experience, the misery, sin and vice that are caused by want and poverty, especially when one has not been always poor from his childhood? I am filled with wonder whenever I recollect that the devil dared to attack Jesus Christ in the desert, and to tempt Him. For, I think to myself, he probably had heard the voice of the heavenly Father speaking to His Son, who was being baptised in the Jordon, and giving Him authority to teach the whole world; and he must have known how our Lord fasted in a most superhuman manner, for forty days and nights. How, then, could he dare to tempt Him? For he should have had enough proof that his temptations would be powerless with the Son of God. Besides, if the devil had known beforehand that he would be defeated, he would have left Christ in peace, partly out of envy, so as not to give Him occasion of greater merit, partly through pride, that he might not be conquered and be forced to submit. How, then, did he dare, I ask again, to tempt our Lord? Because, as Theodoret answers, he had no doubt of victory. It is true that the voice he heard saying that Christ was the Son of God, restrained him somewhat. And he was not a little frightened by His long fasting. But "when He had fasted," says the Scripture of Christ, "forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry."[1] When the devil saw that, he had some hope of succeeding. Theodoret says: "When the enemy saw that he was hungry, he began to hope for victory."[2] Now think of this, my dear brethren, and conclude therefrom: If the devil hoped to conquer Christ our Lord, no matter what he may, or may not have known of Him, he knew, at all events, enough of His former life to see that He was a holy and perfect Man. If, I say, in spite of that, he promised himself a victory over Him, simply because he saw that He was hungry, what would not the wicked tempter hope to accomplish with a hungry and needy person who, as he knows, is not the Son of God? Into what sins, unjustice, theft, impurity, and shameful actions, could he not lead children, by his temptations, when he knows that they suffer from hunger! "Command that these stones be made bread."[3] Try to earn something by that traffic. See, now you have an opportunity of making money by stealing, by going into that company, or by committing sin. Would to God that the devil had nothing but hopes in this way! Would to God that the world had not such experience of crime commit-

[1] . . . Postea esuriit.—Matth. iv. 2. [2] Vidit hostis famem, et victoriam speravit.
[3] Dic, ut lapides isti panes fiant.—Matth. iv. 3.

ted by children through poverty and want! And alas, how many sins, of which we know nothing, come from the same cause, nor shall we know anything of them, until the great day of reckoning comes, when they shall be declared to the whole world! Children, indeed, commit grievous sins and are not to be excused, when they try to procure, by unlawful means, the necessaries of life, that their parents left them without. For, as far as possible, they should endeavor to find some lawful occupation, and trust in divine providence to supply them with what is needful. But, at the same time, woe to those parents who do not perform their duty by providing for, and supporting their sons and daughters as well as they can! All the sins and evils that follow from their neglect are to be attributed to them, and they must answer for them in judgment.

The law of justice as well.

Finally, the law of justice binds parents to perform their duty, in this respect, to their children. As long as I am the owner of a horse, and it is in my possession, I alone am bound to feed it, if I wish it to live; and if I bring it into another's stable, or knowingly allow it to go there without leave from the owner of the stable, and intending thus that he should support my horse, I commit an injustice. Now, children belong to their parents, under God, and therefore these latter, and no others, are bound to do their best to feed and support them properly. In a word, it is a general rule that he who gives life to a thing, is bound to preserve that thing, and to supply it with what is necessary to its natural existence. A tree receives its life from the earth, and from the earth it also gets its nourishment; the fruit has its life from the tree, and must be supported by the same tree, until it is ripe. Father and mother have, under God, given life to their children, and therefore, they are in justice bound to support those children, as well as they can. So that there can be no doubt that parents are obliged to take this care of their children, for the law of nature, the law of charity, the law of justice, and even the reason itself of every one, who has not lost all vestige of humanity, prove this. But would to God that all who know their duty in this respect, fulfilled it exactly! How is that, you again ask, my dear brethren; are there parents in the world who neglect that duty? Indeed there are, and not a few of them, too, are to be found amongst Catholic Christians, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

Mothers who, without weighty reasons, do not nurse their own children, sin against this duty.

The first great fault committed against this duty, will seem strange indeed to you, and it is common enough amongst those who are least to be suspected of it, namely, the rich and wealthy, who can leave their children money enough. That fault is committed by those mothers who, without sufficient cause, or through exaggerated fears, do not nurse their own children, but intrust them to the care of strangers, that they themselves may have less trouble. God Himself complains of such people by the Prophet Jeremias: "Even the sea monsters have given suck to their young; the daughter of my people is cruel, like the ostrich in the desert."[1] Of this bird, Job says: "She leaveth her eggs on the earth. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers."[2] Unnatural mothers that you are; unless you are prevented from performing this duty by real illness or weakness, or other reasonable cause! Why has your Creator given you children, if not that you may attend to them? How can children have a natural, proper, and childlike love for you, if you neglect them in their tenderest years?

Many evils follow therefrom.

And how many great evils are often the consequence of that which you would try to ignore altogether, if you could! For, how do you know the character of the people to whom you intrust your children? Do you know their dispositions and inclinations? Whether they are well, or ill-reared? Whether they are inclined to sin and vice? If this latter is the case, your poor children will be infected with their wickedness and vice, and be boorish, rude, and uncultivated in their manners, and utterly unlike their parents; for experience shows that children easily copy the manners and dispositions of those who take care of them. Hence, Titus, the son of Vespasian, was always sickly and delicate, because his nurse had a secret malady. Tiberius Nero, who was called Biberius Nero, on account of his drunken habits, was brought up by a nurse who was much given to wine. Caligula was a blood-thirsty tyrant, as all the world knows, and he inherited that character from his nurse. It is frequently the case that nurses are wicked people, who practise witchcraft, and initiate the little children intrusted to their care, in their diabolical art, and the children are with difficulty induced to give it up afterwards. On account of these and other similar evils, there have

[1] Sed et lamiæ lactaverunt catulos suos: filia populi mei crudelis, quasi struthio in deserto.—Lam. iv. 3.

[2] Derelinquit ova sua in terra. Duratur ad filios quasi non sint ei.—Job xxxix. 14–16.

been great queens, and princesses, and ladies of the highest rank, and there are some still, who would never allow others to look after their children, no matter how troublesome they themselves might find it to do so. "The daughter of my people is cruel like the ostrich in the desert."[1] Unmerciful as ostriches are those mothers, who through sheer love of their own comfort, neglect the children that God gave them to look after, and intrust them to the care of strangers!

Parents who do not support all their children alike.

Another class, who do not support their children properly, consists of those parents who, without just cause, do not treat their children alike, as far as the care of their temporal welfare is concerned. Sometimes a son or a daughter takes complete possession of the father's or mother's heart. When that is the case, no trouble nor expense is spared to dress them nicely, to educate them well, and to give them a position in the world, while the other sons or daughters, because they are not so beautiful, or have some natural defect, and cannot get any share in their parents' affection, are treated with indifference, and are allowed to get on as best they may. Every effort is made to induce these latter to enter a convent, or to obtain a benefice for them, whether they are fit for it or not, whether they are called by God to that state, or not, whether they wish it themselves, or not; all these questions are passed over lightly enough, as long as the favorite son or daughter can have the whole inheritance. Unjust father, unjust mother, says St. Ambrose, do you know what you are doing? This favoritism is a torch that will kindle the fire of dissension in your family and your descendants. It will sow the seeds of jealousy, of envy, vindictiveness, lawsuits, and disputes between brothers and sisters. Are they not all your children? Does not the one, as well as the other, come from you? Has not the one, as well as the other, been left with you by God as a deposit? Why, therefore, should you care more for one, than for the other? Your children have an equal share of your flesh and blood; let them also share equally in your affection.[2] It is frequently the case that, by a just judgment of God, the children who are idolized, as favorites of their parents, looked upon as the hope of the family, and who therefore receive the far greater share of the inheritance, through some trickery or other, either die an untimely death, or have no children of their own, or else they lose and squander away the property they

[1] Filia populi mei crudelis, quasi struthio in deserto.

[2] Jungat liberos æqualis gratia quos jungit æqualis natura.

have so unjustly acquired, and they are often the very ones who give least comfort and consolation, and who cause the most grief and sorrow to their parents. And that is to be expected! "Thou art just, oh, Lord, and Thy judgment is right."[1]

Who through avarice, do not allow their children to study or learn a trade that they may leave them more money at their death.

The third class consists of those rich but avaricious parents, whose only care is to be able to leave a large sum of money to their children at their death, while during their lives they either allow their children to remain idle, or do not make them learn a trade, or profession, so as to save expense, and make them rich afterwards. What a wretched way that is to provide for children! That is not the way to support them according to their condition. What good will your money be to them after your death? They will be ill-mannered, boorish, and ignorant, fit for no important office, and they will resemble blocks of wood that are silvered or gilded over; they will not know how to do anything but spend the money, that you have saved for them, with their own children, and that they will do sooner or later, until they have nothing left, and are reduced to want and poverty. No, Christian parents, the best inheritance you can leave your children is some honest trade, business, or profession, which you must have them taught in their youth, so that afterwards they may be able to provide for themselves, although you cannot leave them anything. This is also meant for those misers who, when their children have chosen a state of life, either refuse them the promised sum of money, or do not help them to get on, although they could easily afford to do so. That is often the reason why children secretly look forward to, and long for the death of their old father or mother.

They who dress themselves and their children above their station.

The fourth class of those who do not provide for their children as they ought, consists of those parents who dress themselves and their children above their means and condition. What a frightful abuse that is in our days, even amongst Christians, who renounce formally the pomps and vanities of the world in holy Baptism, and profess to follow the standard of the humble Jesus on the narrow way of penance, and of the cross! What a fearful abuse, I repeat, is that accursed luxury in dress! What an amount of money it costs every year in a town, and that money is sent away to foreign countries to bring home new fashions and new dresses! How many respectable families, who could otherwise live decently according to their state, are thereby brought to poverty, because they wish to put on as good an ap-

[1] Justus es, Domine, et rectum judicium tuum.—Ps. cxviii. 137.

pearance as others, and do not wish to dress differently from the rest of the world! I will not dwell on what most of the holy Fathers say of it, namely, that luxury in dress can hardly be without sin, nor shall I now say what kind of a sin it is, nor how many sins it occasions; I merely ask you, how can it be consistent with the proper nourishment, support, and temporal interest of your children and of your children's children, if your yearly income is barely sufficient to pay the merchants and shopkeepers, and if all that you make by your business or employment is spent on dress for yourselves and your children? And that is only too often the case nowadays. So that one can hardly distinguish between the different conditions that have been appointed amongst people by God, nor can one distinguish between the daughters of a rich and a poor man. To such a degree of arrogance have people come, that it is enough to excite laughter. Many, when they go out, carry their whole property on their backs, so that when they come home again, they have hardly bread and meat enough to eat, and to feed the bodies that they deck out in such a costly manner. Nor have they anything left to share with Jesus Christ in the person of His poor, as they ought, and in addition to the waste of their income, they incur debts that they will hardly ever be able to pay. When Totila, the king of the Goths, sent one of his officers, dressed up in royal robes, to St. Bernard, the holy man said to the latter, as soon as he saw him: "Put off what you are wearing, my son, for it is not your own."[1] The same might be said nowadays to many children of the world, who strut about in fashionable clothing: Sir, madam, son, or daughter, that dress is not your own. Those precious ear-rings, that silver or gold lace, that velvet or silk cloak, that damask robe, belong to the merchant, who has entered all your magnificent dresses in his book of debts, and who must, perhaps, wait a long time before he is paid. That fashionable dress, those embroidered slippers, belong to the tailor or shoemaker, who is not yet paid for his labor, and who, therefore, must suffer the pinch of poverty. Put it off; it is not yours.[2] Such is the case, my dear brethren, with many people in the world, although I do not know any of them in particular, who run into debt through extravagance in dress, and impoverish others by not paying them at all, or by deferring payment for a long time.

And thus wilfully reduce them-

And what can be the result of this in the long run, but poverty? For, not only do parents thus make themselves unable to

[1] Depone fili, depone quod geris; nam tuum non est. [2] Depone, tuum non est.

leave their children anything, but they also deliberately place the latter in such a position, that they can never raise themselves out of the secret poverty into which they have fallen, because it is a very hard thing, indeed, to be obliged to give up a position to which one is accustomed, and to dress more plainly, and thus make one's poverty known to every one. Thus children are often driven to unlawful means and dangerous plans in order to be able to dress as well as before, and of course they remain always poor then. Oh, if every one profited by the exhortations of the holy Apostle, St. Paul: "But having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content"![1] My dear Christians, if we have enough to clothe and feed ourselves decently, let us be satisfied therewith, and then families will be much better off, and the children can be properly provided for. But there is no use in talking! People will insist on showing off. The fashions and customs of the world must be followed, and many think that it is better to have a dish less at table, and even to suffer hunger and poverty, rather than appear less than others through Christian modesty and humility! Let those who are of this opinion do as they please, as far as I am concerned. Reduce yourselves to want, if you are determined on it, but do not hereafter blame any but yourselves, and your own wilfulness, pride, and vanity, for the poverty that you will surely suffer. Cruel, heartless parents that you are, who thus foolishly squander what should be employed to bring up and support your children decently!

selves to poverty.

To this class belong also those parents who, along with their children, lead an idle and luxurious life: The father gives many unnecessary entertainments; the mother and her daughters spend the whole morning in bed; the greater part of the day is passed in doing nothing, and the rest is taken up with visiting, gambling, eating, and drinking; thus the yearly income is found barely sufficient, and they will have nothing to leave their children afterwards. The rich glutton "feasted sumptuously every day,"[2] as the Gospel says, whilst poor Lazarus lay before his door, begging in vain for a piece of bread. It seems to me that many parents act in the same manner: they eat, drink, and enjoy themselves, without caring how their children will fare afterwards; although the latter live in hopes of inheriting enough from their parents to continue the same luxurious mode of life.

Who, along with their children, lead an idle, luxurious life.

[1] Habentes autem alimenta, et quibus tegamur, his contenti sumus.—I. Tim. vi. 8.
[2] Epulabatur quotidie splendide.—Luke xvi. 19.

But they will be disappointed, and will perhaps be like the poor Lazarus, forced to beg their bread from door to door.

Who spend their money in gambling and drinking.

Finally, the most heartless, and as far as this matter is concerned, the most wicked parents are those fathers, and (what a disgraceful thing!) those mothers even, who are given to gambling and drinking, and who either shorten or destroy, by their drunken habits, the lives that they are bound to preserve for the good of their children, or make themselves unable to attend to their business, employment, or housekeeping as they ought, and to lay by something for their children; or, as is, alas, frequently the case, by constant tippling, spend on Sundays and holy-days what they earn during the week, nay, even what their wives and children earn by their labor, and meanwhile the poor mother and her wretched children must remain hungry at home, feeding themselves with bitter tears, and not having any decent clothes to cover themselves with. What an injustice crying to Heaven! The very men to whom God has given wives and children to look after, are the ones who rob them of what belongs to them, and bring them to poverty! It is a sin against Christian mercy not to defend and support poor widows and orphans when one can; what a fearful cruelty it must then be to take from them what they have, and to reduce them to beggary; and those one's own wives and children! And to do that by drunkenness, that is to say, by committing sin, and offending God! What sins follow from that! How those children must hate and curse their father! How desperate the mother must become, so that the whole family are likely to exchange temporal for eternal misery! Poor children, how I pity you who have such parents! It were better for you to have been born in the desert, with wild beasts for your father and mother, for they would at least have provided for you properly! And you, parents (wild beasts, I should call you, were it not that the name is too good for you, for even wild beasts suffer hunger and thirst that they may feed their young), what think you of your unnatural conduct? The pelican, as naturalists tell us, draws the blood from its own breast in order to feed its young; but you, reasoning beings (shame on you!), drink, so to speak, the blood of your own children, for you snatch the bread out of their mouths to satisfy your gluttony and drunkenness. How will you account for your cruelty before the judgment-seat of God? If you do not wish to support your children properly, why have you brought them into the world?

Conclusion and exhor-

Think of this, and ponder on it, Christian parents! Attend, as

far as you can, and in the first place, to the eternal salvation of your children, and next to that, see that you provide for their support and temporal welfare with all possible diligence. Think to yourselves: My state of life, to which God has called me, requires this; I am bound to it, also, by the law of Christian and parental charity towards my children, and by the law of justice, nay, even by the law of nature itself. If the prosperity of your children is a matter of indifference to you, although I can hardly imagine that, then remember, at least, that your children belong to the number of those of whom Christ has said: "Amen, I say to you: as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."[1] If the Son of God, still a child, were intrusted to any father and mother, with what great care and diligence would they not attend to Him! But you must now consider the same Son of God, Jesus Christ, in the persons of your children. If the labor is sometimes too much for you, if you have a great deal of trouble in supporting and bringing up your children, remember what God said to our forefather after the fall: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread;"[2] and therefore say to yourselves: In the sweat of my face I must work for myself and for those who belong to me, so that they may not be brought to want through my idleness, and that they may not be without that which God, our common Father, has commanded us to pray for every day: "Give us this day our daily bread."[3] But think at the same time: Nothing can be gained without labor, therefore I will work as well as I can, and spare no trouble, with renewed confidence in my heavenly Father, who feeds the birds of the air, and who, if I fear and love Him, will not let me and mine want for anything, according to the testimony of the Prophet: "I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread."[4] I will trust in God and in righteousness, and will place my confidence in Him, as well as in my daily labor, and then I shall receive daily bread and temporal blessings for myself and my children. Amen.

tation to parents to provide for their children.

[1] Amen dico vobis: quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis minimis, mihi fecistis.—Matth. xxv. 40.

[2] In sudore vultus tui vesceris pane.—Gen. iii. 19.

[3] Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie.

[4] Non vidi justum derelictum, nec semen ejus quærens panem.—Ps. xxxvi. 25.

Another Introduction for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Cujus filius est?—Matth. xxii. 42.
"Whose son is He?"

How that question will one day resound in the valley of Josaphat! Whose son is he;[1] whose daughter is she? Who is the father, who is the mother, of these children? What a consoling question it will be for many parents, who have brought up good and pious children, and who can now give them up to their Judge, saying: I am their father; I am their mother! Here are all my children with me; I have lost none of them through my own fault. Whose son is he; whose daughter is she? What a terrible question for most parents who have brought up their children according to the maxims of the vain world, and who now stand before their Judge to hear Him pronounce sentence of condemnation on themselves and their children too, unless they have done true penance in this life! Hitherto, my dear brethren, we have seen in detail, etc.—*continues as before.*

FORTY-EIGHTH SERMON.

ON THE GREAT CARE THAT PARENTS MUST TAKE OF THEIR CHILDREN, AS FAR AS TEMPORAL THINGS ARE CONCERNED.

Subject.

1st. Some parents care too much for their children, and for their sake make an unlawful use of otherwise lawful means. 2d. Others use unjust means. The first is great folly; the second excessive stupidity.—*Preached on the twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost and the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

Text.

Beatus venter, qui te portavit!—Luke xi. 27.
"Blessed is the womb that bore Thee!"

[1] Cujus filius est?

Introduction.

Oh, truly happy and blessed Mother, who amongst all women, wast alone found worthy to bear in thy womb a Son whose Father is the Eternal God, to nourish and suckle at thy virginal bosom Him at whose Name all in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth must bend the knee! Forgive me if I do not say more in thy praise to-day, for I wish to finish the subject I have hitherto been speaking of, in thy honor, and that thou and thy Son may be served, loved, and praised by many others. And happy, too, are you parents, who will one day be able to say with truth: I have reared, nursed, fed, and supported my children, and taught them during their lives to love Jesus Christ, to be His friends and imitators, His brothers and sisters, so that they may now rejoice forever with their Father in Heaven! But woe, if the contrary is the case, if your son or daughter must cry out from the flames of hell: "Accursed be the womb that bore me!"[1] Cursed be the father who gave me life, the mother who suckled me! Or if it must be said of you: Cursed be the father, or mother, who gave life to, or brought forth, that son, that daughter! Their miserable children are in hell for all eternity, because their parents did not bring them up for Heaven, and because they did not support them, and look after their temporal interests, as they could and should have done. That such a terrible misfortune may be averted from every one, all faults regarding this important duty should be carefully amended. In my last sermon I proved that parents sin by not caring enough for the support and temporal interest of their children; now I am about to speak to those parents who care too much for their children's temporal welfare, and thus sin by excess.

Plan of Discourse.

Some parents care too much for their children, and for their sake make an unlawful use of otherwise lawful means. The first part. Others use unjust means. The second part. The first is great folly; the second excessive stupidity.

Save all parents from those two evils, oh, heavenly Father, by the intercession of that most Blessed Mother, who bore Thy Son in her womb! And do you, oh, holy angels guardian, help herein, that we may say to all children of their parents: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee."[2]

[1] Maledictus venter, qui me portavit! [2] Beatus venter, qui te portavit.

What is excessive is of no use.

Is it possible to be too careful of the temporal prosperity of children, especially when lawful means are used to secure it? It is hardly possible to support one's self and one's children decently, nowadays, without a good deal of trouble. Many people have large families, and they know not but they may be larger still; all their children must have enough to eat and drink, and they must dress according to their station. All that requires a good sum every year; and how can it be obtained unless people work hard for it? The father and mother have their hands full, until they get their children decently settled in life. Besides, the latter expect something on their parents' death. Oh, it is easy to talk for one who is sure of having his meals at the proper time, and of getting what clothing he wants, without having to ask where they come from. But that will not do for us, people of the world; we must work hard to get what we want. How can we, then, do too much? If we use lawful means for our object, who can accuse us of excess, or say that we are guilty of sin? And you are quite right, too, my dear brethren, only you must remember the old proverb, "All excess is faulty."[1] Even the care you must have of your children's temporal welfare, if it is to profit them anything, should be regulated by prudence and discretion.

Such is the case with parents who are so eager about their children's welfare, that they neglect the service of God, although they do not make use of unlawful means.

Now, there are fathers and mothers of families who depend altogether on their own industry and labor, for their happiness and prosperity. They are so taken up with their domestic cares, with their trade, or business, or employment, that they hardly think of God once in the day; they never hear Mass on week days; they have no time for piety or devotion; they hardly hear a sermon once in the half year; they are satisfied with going to confession and communion once or twice a year, and they are always uneasy, anxious and disturbed; their thoughts and ideas are constantly turning on making money, and in order to attain that end with greater certainty, they seldom give alms to the poor and needy, although they thus act in a very unchristian and unlawful manner, or else they give alms very sparingly and not according to their means, solely through fear that they or their children may suffer loss, if they refuse to give alms altogether. It is of such people that I speak; and I say, without any fear of being mistaken, or of being guilty of a rash judgment, that they do too much altogether. Their care for their children's temporal welfare is excessive, and therefore I call it foolish and culpable.

[1] Omne nimium vertitur in vitium.

In the first place, they forget themselves in their eagerness to labor for others. They bake the bread to feed others, while they themselves suffer hunger. They are like the oxen that plough the land, but can never reap a crop off it, nor have any advantage from their labor but the straw that is thrown to them for food. They forget their own lives, that their children may have the means of living a few, uncertain years here below, and they keep only the useless straw for their immortal souls, which they allow to remain poor and naked, like a beggar's child, for after death they will have nothing left to live on for eternity. What folly that is! Well ordered charity should begin from one's self, especially in what concerns the soul. The learned and holy Bishop Salvianus writes with great compassion for such parents: "Oh, unhappy and miserable condition, to use temporal goods to gain happiness for others, and sorrow for one's self."[1] Do you, then, care so little for your souls, fathers and mothers, that through love of your sons or daughters, and merely because they bear your names, you neglect your own spiritual welfare, and are prepared to go bare and empty of good works into the house of your eternity? Salvianus continues: "Love your children—we can find no fault with that—but next to yourselves—love them so as not to appear to hate yourselves;"[2] for it is a foolish love that makes us think so much of others, that we forget ourselves. Remember that the judgment of God awaits you after death, and then the word will be: "Behold the man and his works;"[3] and the first question will be: What do you bring for your soul? Where are the good works for which you can expect a reward? But you do not think of that now; you forget yourselves; you grovel in the earth like worms seeking something to eat. Your only care is to leave your children some money, that they may enjoy themselves after you die, so that you leave your poor souls in poverty and nakedness. "Return rather to thyself."[4] First God, then your souls, and after that your children. Give, therefore, first of all, to God what belongs to Him, and to your souls what belongs to them, and then you are free to look after the spiritual and temporal welfare of your children. But what have I said? That you labor for the good of others? That you are too anxious about the food and support

It is a folly, because they forget their own souls to labor for others.

[1] O infelix et miseranda conditio, bonis suis aliis præparare beatitudinem, sibi afflictionem.

[2] Amate, non obsistimus, amate filios vestros, sed tamen secundo a vobis gradu. Ita eos diligite, ne vos ipsos odisse videamini.

[3] Ecce homo, et opera ejus. [4] Revertere potius in te.

of your children? I should rather have said that you care too little about the temporal prosperity of your sons and daughters, and I should have classed you amongst those idle and careless parents, of whom we spoke in the last sermon, for you neglect the best means of securing your own and your children's temporal welfare.

For they forget God, from whom all blessings must come.

For what are you thinking of, foolish people that you are? Do you think you can have a blessing on your household, when you neglect and refuse to serve Him who alone can bestow a blessing on your labor and trouble? If God is not on your side, what will all your care, and anxiety, and labor, and trouble profit you? If God wishes to bestow a blessing on you, who can prevent Him from so doing? But, as I have said in a former sermon, you wish to begin the building without the architect, and of course you will not succeed. "Except the Lord build the house," that is, helps you to support your family, all that you do for that purpose is labor in vain.[1] So that you place your stone and timber on a foundation of sand, and the first strong wind will tumble the whole thing down. "You brought it home," says the Prophet, "and I blowed it away,"[2] because you brought it without my help. You do not act sensibly, therefore, nor prudently, for the welfare and advantage of your children, when you labor and work in forgetfulness of the Almighty and His service.

They are much more prudent who labor with God as their Friend.

No, Christian parents, you must manage far differently, if you wish to secure your own and your children's advantage. History tells us of Julius Agricola, a Roman senator, who in his old age fell into disgrace with the emperor, so that he was deprived of his office and dignity. He bore his misfortune with great mildness and patience, and when he was on the point of death, he bequeathed nearly all his property to the emperor, and left only a very small portion of it to his own children. Nearly every one who knew of this strange proceeding, looked upon it as madness and folly; for, said they, he should certainly have provided for his children. Their father's property belonged to them of right, and they stood more in need of it than the emperor did. But others who understood the matter better, could see the prudence and foresight of the plan, and they said that Agricola never did a wiser or more clever thing in his life, for he thus made the

[1] Nisi Dominus ædificaverit domum, in vanum laboravérunt qui ædificant eam.—Ps. cxxvi. 1.

[2] Intulistis in domum, et exsufflavi illud.—Agg. i. 9.

prosperity of his children and descendants far more secure than it otherwise would have been, since, although he left them but a small inheritance, they were sure of the emperor's favor; whereas the greatest riches would have been of little use to them, if the emperor was their enemy. There are many parents, my dear brethren, who resemble the unthinking people who condemned Agricola's action: they are so anxious about the support of their children, that they forget God and neglect His service. They think, foolish people that they are: The time I give to hearing Mass, to attending to different devotions, to prayer and to the practice of virtue, is taken away from my business; I could do a good deal for my children during that time, and they want all I can give them! The alms that I could give to God, in the persons of the poor and needy, are also good for my children, and I must not take away anything from them, and so on. Oh, what folly! you are like a blind man trying to judge of color; you are reckoning without your host. A little of the favor and friendship of the Emperor of Heaven and earth would do more for your and your children's temporal prosperity, than half the riches of earth without His favor and grace. The more children you have, the richer you mean to leave them; the more, if you are wise, you will try to make God friendly to you and yours by good works, so as to benefit by His infinite power and generosity; the more time, too, should you spend in prayer, and other exercises of piety; and the more generous should you be in helping the poor and needy, so as to have as many friends as possible to pray to God for your children, and to gain His favor for them.

Exhortation to all, first to seek God and their souls' welfare, and then to work for their children.

Therefore, I repeat, give to God what belongs to God, and to your souls what belongs to them. This should be your first care. Everything else you may leave to the common Father of all, the Ruler of the world, whose most bounteous Providence will certainly know how to bless your moderate labor and care, and to supply the wants of your children, as He Himself says: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."[1] No matter how busy you are, let not a day pass by without hearing Mass, unless, as sometimes happens, a work of Christian charity may prevent you, for charity goes before all other virtues, and in such circumstances God must often be left for God's sake. You may believe me fully when I tell you that the hearing of holy Mass every day will not in the least

[1] Quærite primum regnum Dei et justitiam ejus, et hæc omnia adjicientur vobis.—Luke xii. 31.

diminish, but will rather increase your temporal prosperity. Never let a month pass by without uniting yourselves to God by a worthy confession and communion. When the conscience is at peace and the will is always united with God, your labor is most likely to turn out well. Make a point of hearing a sermon every Sunday and holy-day, as long as you are in good health. It is only right that, after having labored the whole week for your mortal bodies, you should do something once a week at least, on days specially consecrated to God, for the support of your immortal souls, by giving them their supernatural food and encouraging them afresh in the divine service. In your daily domestic duties, do not forget the good intention; keep yourselves in the presence of God by frequent ejaculations, and you will certainly have the Almighty as your helper in everything you do. When the boatmen on the river get what they call the help of God, that is to say, when their boats are carried swiftly onward by the rapids, they may lay aside their oars, while their boats go a long distance in a short time. In the same way must you act, too, anxious parents: keep God always on your side; do not abandon Him even for a moment. Only try once what you can do by confidence in His Providence, and you will soon see that without God's help, all your care, labor, and trouble could profit nothing. There is another class of parents who are far too anxious about their children's temporal welfare, and who are still more wicked and foolish than the first class, because they use unlawful means to attain their object. We shall speak of them in the

Second Part.

Who use unjust means to support their families.

I speak to you now, misers without conscience, to whom it is a matter of indifference whether you make your profits justly or unjustly, as long as you can make them at all. The Wise Man says: "Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man,"[1] who has gone so far as to set his heart on money and riches, for there is no law, human, divine, or natural, that he is not ready to violate, in order to hoard up wealth. He does not pay his workmen; he keeps shopkeepers and tradesmen a long time waiting for their money; he falsifies his accounts, so as to escape paying his just debts; he gives bribes to lawyers, that his opponent in a law-suit, although his case is just, may lose it. Merchants of this kind sell

[1] Avaro nihil est scelestius.—Eccl. x. 9.

bad wares as if they were good; tradesmen keep the material belonging to others, that is left after having finished their work; shopkeepers change weights and measures; public officials allow themselves to be bribed against the interests of justice; the rich lend money to the poor in time of want, at usurious interest; the powerful abuse their influence to rob widows and orphans, under a pretence of legality; many do not scruple to commit simony so as to get benefices for their sons; servants steal from their masters; others receive stolen goods, paying for them very cheaply, or keep what they find without making any inquiries for the owner, and so they go on, cheating their neighbors in different ways, for a paltry profit, or a worthless gain.

They are foolish and senseless, because they thus rather bring themselves to poverty.

I must again cry out with Salvianus, and with still greater pity than before: "Oh, unhappy and miserable condition!"[1] Oh, foolish people, what are you thinking of? Where are your brains? Tell me, what do you intend to do? What do you desire? Do you mean to help your children in that way? If you intended to reduce them to beggary, and to bring yourselves, along with them, to temporal and eternal misery, then I should say to you: By all means go on, you will certainly attain your object; continue as you have begun, and you will gain your end, for you cannot adopt better means of so doing! And how could money, acquired unjustly, make your children rich? Divine word, daily experience, what have you to say to this? If even lawful labor and means are of no avail, without the help of God, to gain temporal prosperity, if that help cannot be hoped for when the divine service is neglected, even in things that are not commanded under pain of sin, what could you expect to accomplish, when God is against you, when you make the almighty, omnipresent God your sworn enemy? Do you think, perhaps, that God is so weak and feeble that He cannot defeat your unjust projects, and avenge Himself on you; or is He so careless and indifferent that He would not wish to do so? No! Injustice cannot thrive, as the old proverb says. The Lord says, by the Prophet Malachias: "They shall build up, and I will throw down; and they shall be called the borders of wickedness, and the people with whom the Lord is angry forever."[2] They will gather together, and when they think they have something, I will scatter their possessions to the winds. Mark what I now

[1] O infelix et miseranda conditio!

[2] Isti ædificabunt, et ago destruam, et vocabuntur termini impietatis et populus, cui iratus est Dominus usque in æternum.—Malach. i. 4.

say to you: The Almighty will either take away from you, by a premature death, those children for whom you now sacrifice your conscience and your eternal salvation, so that your ill-gotten wealth will fall into the hands of strangers (and happy will you be, oh, children, if God deals thus with you!), or else the saying, "Ill got, ill gone," will be verified in your case. Avaricious parents generally have spendthrift children, who very soon make away with what has been unjustly acquired; or else an angry God, who has borne your wickedness so patiently, will know how to punish you for it by all kinds of calamities, so that your children and your children's children will be brought to bitter poverty.

Proved from Scripture.

And that is what God threatens, by the Prophet Zacharias: "This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the earth, for every thief shall be judged. . . I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall come to the house of the thief, and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof."[1] "The inheritance of the children of sinners shall perish," so that no one will know what has become of them, "and with their posterity shall be a perpetual reproach."[2] So says the Lord by the wise Ecclesiasticus. The children of the wicked, as we read in the book of Job, "shall be oppressed with want."[3] They will have to beg their bread some day or other, at the doors of those whom their parents wronged. "The riches which he hath swallowed, he shall vomit up, and God shall draw them out of his belly; and when he hath the things he coveted, he shall not be able to possess them. There was nothing left of his meat," which he should have shared with the poor, "and therefore nothing shall continue of his goods."[4] Read the Holy Scriptures and you will find examples enough of this kind. Achan wished to enrich his family by unjust means, when he kept for himself the gold he found in Jericho, and therefore he and his whole family were destroyed by fire.[5] Giezi attempted to gain money unjustly,

[1] Hæc est maledictio, quæ egreditur super faciem omnis terræ, quia omnis fur judicabitur. . . Educam illud, dicit Dominus exercituum, et veniet ad domum furis. . . . . et commorabitur in medio domus ejus, et consumet eum, et ligna ejus, et lapides ejus.—Zach. v. 3, 4.

[2] Filiorum peccatorum periet hæreditas et cum semine illorum assiduitas opprobrii.—Eccl. xli. 9.

[3] Filii ejus atterentur egestate.—Job xx. 10.

[4] Divitias, quas devoravit, evomet et de ventre illius extrahet illas Deus; et cum habuerit quæ concupierat possidere non poterit. Non remansit de cibo ejus, et propterea nihil permanebit de bonis ejus.—Ibid. 15 [illegible]

[5] Jos. 7.

when against the command of his master Eliseus, he received presents from Naaman, and therefore he and all his descendants were smitten with leprosy.[1] King Saul tried to become rich by saving the most valuable possessions of the Amalecites from destruction, and keeping them for himself against the command of God, and therefore his children were not allowed to succeed him on the throne.[2] Achab had seventy sons whom he wished to enrich, and in reality he made them exceedingly wealthy, but because he defrauded Naboth of his vineyard, he brought fearful calamities on himself and his sons.[3] He himself died a violent death, and the Sacred Scripture says of his sons: "Jehu slew all that were left of the house of Achab, till there were no remains left of him."[4] Woe, then, I cry out with the Prophet Jeremias: "Woe to him that buildeth up his house by injustice."[5] Foolish parents, that is the way in which you build when you use unlawful means to secure your children's prosperity! You can leave them no other inheritance but a malediction from God!

They lose their own souls, and cause the loss of others.

And even if, as rarely happens, God sometimes, in His inscrutable designs, allows your wickedness to prosper, so that you can make your children rich, and give them a good position in the world, then your desire is quite fulfilled, is it not? And I must congratulate you! I must again cry out with Salvianus: Most unfortunate men that you are![6] If ever I had cause to deplore your misery, I have it now. Most unfortunate people that you are! your whole thought is how others may live comfortably for a time when you die, and you never think of the unhappy death that awaits yourselves! Do you then give yourselves up to the devil, along with your children, for a handful of money? Your children, I say, for they will either restore what you have gained unjustly, or they will not. If they do their duty, to what purpose have you saved money for them? To no purpose, unless to give them the trouble of restitution, and to reduce them to poverty, while you are suffering the torments of hell. If they do not make restitution, when they learn the injustices you committed, oh, woe to them, then, for they will certainly be lost for all eternity, and there is no other alternative! Could you treat your children more cruelly than that? And suppose that, somehow or other, they save their

[1] IV. Reg. v. [2] I. Reg. xv. [3] IV. Reg. v.

[4] Percussit Jehu omnes, qui reliqui erant de domo Achab . . . . . donec non remanerent ex eo reliquiæ.—IV. Reg. x. 1.

[5] Vae, qui ædificat domum suam in injustitia.—Jerem. xxii. 13.

[6] Infelicissimi hominum!

souls; you are still lost forever. What greater folly could there be, than to ruin one's self for the sake of others, and to walk deliberately into hell, that they may live a few years in comfort and pleasure? Most wretched people that you are![1]

Yet there are such foolish parents.

And yet there are parents who have reached such a degree of folly and madness, that they never trouble themselves about the hereafter. They think, like the ambitious mother of Nero, Agrippina, who was determined that her son should be emperor, and who answered the soothsayers, who assured her that Nero would kill her on ascending the throne: "Let him kill me; as long as he is emperor I do not care!"[2] Christian parents, it is not a lying soothsayer, but the God of truth Himself, who assures you that if you leave unjustly-acquired wealth to your children, you are lost forever; and if you try to enrich them by unlawful means, you incur the sentence of eternal damnation, the eternal death of the soul! What do you think of this? Do you say, like Agrippina, if not in words at least by your actions: "Let him kill me; as long as he is emperor I do not care." It makes no matter; I do not care for my soul; it can be lost forever, as long as my children are rich; I am quite ready to give myself to the devil, if that is the only way of providing for them. Provided my son gets that employment, that benefice, and my daughter makes a good match, my soul may go to hell. What folly! What madness! Woe to you, indeed, if you go to that place which you have so blindly chosen! Once you are there you will repent and think quite differently, when it will be too late. Accursed son, or daughter, you will then say, for your sake I have come to this place of torments from which I shall never be freed! What good is it to me now, that you have inherited a little money from me, since I must suffer hunger and thirst for all eternity? What does it profit me that you can live comfortably on what I have left you, while I am tormented here on your account? Of what use is it to me that you are in a good position in the world, since that very thing makes me now a laughing stock for the demons? Accursed be the hour that I gave you life! Oh, how blind, how foolish has my mistake been!

Explained by an example.

Such is doubtless the useless repentance of that wretched father of whom I have heard from credible witnesses: On his deathbed, he was warned and exhorted by his confessor to restore property that he had unjustly acquired, or else he would lose his soul. But, said he, sighing deeply, if I make restitution, my

[1] Infelicissimi hominum! [2] Occidat dum imperet.

children will have nothing. That may be, said the confessor, but nevertheless, restitution must be made, or you are lost forever. Well, then, said the sick man, who was beginning to be moved by the priest's exhortations, I will send for my son, and tell him to make it. You may easily imagine how glad the priest was to hear this. But when the son came into the room, and heard of the turn things had taken, he was very much displeased, and cried out: Father, what have you done? Do you want to leave me a beggar? Alas, my dear son, said the other, it cannot be helped; if I do not make restitution, I am lost forever! Nonsense; said the son; you need not trouble so much about that; when you have spent a few days in hell, you will get quite used to it; so you may leave things as they are, and let me inherit what belongs to me. Wicked and selfish son, have you allowed the thirst for money to take such possession of you, that you do not hesitate to sacrifice your father, from whom you have received your life, to eternal flames? And still more to be deplored the conduct of the miserable father, who was persuaded to change his mind by his son's words, and to die without making restitution! Wretched soul; go, for your son's sake, to that place of torments, and see whether you will get so used to it as your son pretended!

Conclusion and warning to all, to act like prudent parents, and not lose their souls for their children's sake.

Christians, think of this now, while there is still time to correct your mistake. Often imagine yourselves to have arrived at that last moment, in which you are about to depart into a long eternity, and change now what you would wish to have changed then, like a far more prudent father, of whom Father Francis Labata tells us. This man, during his life, used to practise usury, so that he might be able to leave his son a rich inheritance; but on his death bed, he received a special grace from God (such as is hardly given to one of hundreds who defer their repentance so long): he confessed his sins, repented of them, and had already made arrangements to restore his ill-gotten goods, when, as in the other case, the son came into the room, and threw himself down on his knees at his father's bedside, complaining with tears of the poverty to which he was about to be reduced. Have pity, said he, on your unfortunate son! Yes, answered the father, I will; but you must do something for me. What is it, asked the son; I will do it willingly, though it cost me half my life blood. I want you, said the father, to take a burning coal, and hold it in your hand for an hour. The son ran to the fire at once; but hardly had he touched the coal when he let it fall again; the

pain was too great for him to bear. He came back, and said: Father, I cannot do it. How, my son, replied the other; I have worked so hard for you, and you cannot hold a live coal in your hand for one hour! How then can you expect me to burn alive in hell for all eternity, body and soul, for your sake? No, I cannot do that! I am not so foolish! Away with all that does not lawfully belong to me! Provide for yourself as best you can; I wish to go to Heaven. Such, Christian parents, should be the unalterable resolution of you all, before the hour of death comes. Examine yourselves often, and imagine that you see before you the torments of hell. Ask yourselves: Am I ready to suffer hunger and thirst for eternity? Am I willing to descend into that lake of fire, and to burn there forever? Oh, no, I cannot; I will not! And make your resolution, once for all: I will never do anything for any one's sake, no matter how dear he is to me, for which I would have to go to hell? I will take all possible care of those belonging to me, and will work for them, but in a lawful manner, so as not to go against my conscience, nor injure my soul. I desire and wish for nothing for myself and my children, but what God is pleased to give us, and to bestow on my labor. And if you are not rich, say often to your children: Although we are poor, yet the will of God must be done! We have still the most precious thing of all: we are poor, but we can enjoy many goods if we fear and love God; therefore, we will live and labor together, so that we may possess eternal riches and honors, and then we shall be wealthy enough. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Illi autem neglexerunt et abierunt, alius in villam suam, alius vero ad negotiationem suam.—Matth. xxii. 5.

"But they neglected and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise."

It happens with us mortals nowadays, just as Christ says in the parable: The King of Heaven invites all to the eternal marriage feast of His Son, and how do most of those who are invited act? They disregard the invitation and go their ways,[1] "one to his farm, another to his merchandise;" that is to say, their whole

[1] Illi autem neglexerunt et abierunt.

attention is turned to earthly things, so that they forget eternity, and that they do, not for their own sake, but, as a general rule, for the sake of others—for their children and their posterity—so as to leave them well off. Is not that great folly and madness? In the last sermon, my dear brethren, on this subject, etc.—*continues as before.*

FORTY-NINTH SERMON.

ON THE USEFULNESS OF ALMS-GIVING FOR THE TEMPORAL WELFARE OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

Subject.

Parents who have many children and a small income, must for that very reason be generous to the poor; for thereby even their worldly possessions will be increased in this life.—*Preached on the sixth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Unde illos quis poterit hic saturare panibus in solitudine?—Mark viii. 4.

"From whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness?"

Introduction.

Such a great crowd of hungry people: there were four thousand of them; how could they be fed? And in the wilderness, too, where there was nothing but thorns and brambles? We have only seven loaves, and they are hardly enough for ourselves. How is it possible to satisfy so many people with such a small quantity? Thus did the disciples speak to Christ. We are nearly in the same position, my dear brethren. We are bound by the divine and natural law to help the poor and needy with alms. How can we help them all? is the question that some ask; there are such numbers of poor nowadays. And so none of them are helped. The question of others is: Who can give alms in the desert?[1] That is, in such bad times that one has enough to do

[1] Quis poterit in solitudine?

to provide for himself? And thus the times become very hard, indeed, for the poor and needy. Who can give alms? is the question of most, especially married people. I have only seven loaves; that is, I have barely enough, and have a large family to support. My income is hardly enough to support us decently, so that I am bound to economize. And thus, very little Christian mercy is shown to the poor, or it is not shown as generously as it should be. That is a clear sign of a want of faith and confidence in the providence, power, and goodness of God. As if He who can produce so much from an insignificant seed that is put into the ground, could not or would not make rich compensation for what is given to the poor! The disciples of Christ, who were then men of little faith, saw that He had power so to multiply the seven loaves, that when they were distributed among the hungry crowd, there still remained more than there originally were. That is, as St. Augustine says, a symbol of the fruitfulness of alms: Christ wished to teach us thereby that alms-giving does not lessen, but increases our wealth. And that is what I shall now explain, in order to refute the excuses already mentioned, that people bring forward, and especially the last one.

Plan of Discourse

If you have many children and a small income, yet you can, and even must, give generous alms to the poor; for thereby your worldly possessions will be increased in this life. That is the whole subject of to-day's exhortation.

Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, thou wast especially the Mother of the poor, while on earth, for at the wedding of the poor people in Cana of Galilee, thou saidst to thy Son: "They have no wine."[1] There are many of whom it could now be said with truth: "They have no bread."[2] Thou canst intercede for these, by moving all here present to do the work of Christian mercy. May thy Son grant us that grace through thy intercession, and the holy angels guardian.

Folly of a father who, because he has many children, does not wish to sow seed.

A father of a family keeps his rye and wheat in the barn, and does not plant them in his land; his servant comes and tells him it is time to sow the seed. No, says the other, I will not sow; I have too large a family; my income is hardly enough to support them decently; the times are bad; I must keep what corn I have, or I may have none at all bye-and-bye.

[1] Vinum non habent.—John ii. 3. [2] Panem non habent.

What, the servant, who is far more sensible than his master, says, what do you mean? Have you lost your senses? That is the very reason that you should sow the seed more abundantly, if you wish to support yourself and your family. The more children you have, the more crops you want; and in return for the one grain of corn you put into the ground, you will have fifty, sixty, or even more at harvest time. If you had no seed at all left, you should even buy some, so as to be able to sow, and to prevent your land from lying idle at such a loss to yourself.

Folly of a merchant, who for the same reason does not place his money out at interest.

A merchant gives up his business, because he has a large family, and he wishes to keep his money; you tell him there are many rich people who are willing to borrow from him at five per cent. interest, and to give him security worth ten times the money advanced to them; but he is not to be moved. He sticks to his former resolution, and says: I will keep my money to support myself and my children, and I will leave them what is over after my death; otherwise I might lose all and become poor. But you would say to him, have you lost your wits? What is the good of allowing your money to lie idle in your coffers? It will grow less every day, and never increase. Lend it at interest, and it will bring in more for you every year. Invest it, if you want to make anything for yourself and your children; for in twenty years you will receive the whole value of your capital in interest alone; and your heirs can receive five per cent. for it after your death. What is your opinion, my dear brethren, of these two people? Do you think they act for the best interests of their children?

Just as great is the folly of those who do not give alms, because they have many children, for alms are seeds planted.

But you must form the same opinion of those who are hard and stingy towards the poor, on the pretext that they want their money and bread for their children and their families. What is an alms given to the poor? It is the seed, as St. Paul tells us, that is cast into fruitful ground, and brings in a hundred-fold. "He that ministereth seed to the sower," are his words in the ninth chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, in which he exhorts them to be generous to the poor. Give cheerfully and do not be afraid that you will be the losers, for He "that ministereth seed to the sower," that he may sow it, "will both give you bread to eat; and He will multiply your seed, and increase the growth of the fruits of your justice, that being rich, in all things you may abound."[1]

[1] Qui autem administrat semen seminanti, et panem ad manducandum præstabit, et multiplicabit semen vestrum, et angebit incrementa frugum justitiæ vestræ, ut in omnibus locupletati abundetis. II Cor. ix. 10, 11.

And money lent at interest.

What is an alms? It is money lent at interest, nay, even a divine interest, which returns, not five for a hundred, but a hundred for five. "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord."[1] And to what lord? To some one in this world? Oh, that would be too dangerous, for even the best are not always to be trusted! How often do we not hear of people who imagine that their money is as safe as if it were under lock and key, when they have a receipt, signed in presence of witnesses by those to whom they lend it, and yet they find themselves deceived afterwards, and wait in vain for payment? And yet, in spite of all these dangers, people are so eager for gain, that they do not hesitate to lend their money. There is another Lord, however, with whom money may be invested in the shape of alms, with the most complete security. You must not imagine, oh, Christian, when a ragged, hungry man begs at your door for a piece of bread for God's sake, or when a blind or crippled man piteously implores your help as you are going along the street, or when those poor people, who are ashamed to beg, ask assistance of you through others—you must not imagine, I say, that these are the people to whom you can lend your food, your clothing, your money at interest. Oh, certainly, if you hoped for a temporal return from them, you would be disappointed; you would invest your money very badly indeed; you would not recover the interest, much less the capital.

It is Christ who takes this money at interest.

No, Christian hearers; but although you cannot hope to get any return from the beggar, the blind man, or the poor citizen, do not, therefore, be afraid to intrust your money to him. It is the great Almighty God, the Owner of all things, who comes to you in the person of the beggar and the poor man; it is God who takes the alms from you, as a capital borrowed at interest, nay, at usurious interest. Could you find a richer, safer, or more faithful Lord, to whom to lend it? Could you have the least fear of being at a loss through Him? "Can any one be richer than he, of whom God says that He is his Debtor?"[2] says St. Zeno. Do you, perhaps, doubt that? Certainly you do not see the person of God marked on the poor man's forehead. But hear what the Lord Himself says in the Gospel of St. Matthew, and says, too, in the clearest and most emphatic manner: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least breth-

[1] Fœneratur Domino, qui miseretur pauperibus.—Prov. xix. 17.

[2] Quid potest esse ditius homine, cujus profitetur Deus se esse debitorem?

ren, you did it to Me;"[1] and what you refused them, you refused Me. St. John Chrysostom says: "Christ is in want,"[2] when you see a poor person; "it is Christ who is hungry and thirsty, who is a beggar and naked."[3] He stretches out His hand for an alms, and even if you give Him only a penny, a piece of dry bread, or a drop of cold water, He will not refuse it,[4] but will receive it with gratitude. Jesus Christ, says St. Augustine, cries out at our door: Give an alms, for God's sake, to this poor man; I will take it from you by his hand. I do not ask from you as much as I have given you. I have shed every drop of my Blood for you, and all I ask of you in return is to give a drink of water to my brethren when they are thirsty. I give you my Body as your food, and I will be satisfied with a piece of bread from you, when my brethren are hungry. I have freed you from the prison of hell, and now I ask you to visit and console Me, when my brethren are in prison. I have saved you from death, and given you life; do you in return visit Me, when my brethren are sick, etc. Such are the words of St. Augustine; what more testimony of man do you require in support of this truth? Do you not yet believe it? Then I appeal to the judgment of God Himself; for what else but that truth will be heard there, both by the good and the wicked? "I was hungry," will Christ say, "I was thirsty, I was naked, etc."[5] St. Peter Chrysologus exclaims with astonishment: "How powerful with God is the love of the poor,"[6] or rather the pleasure He has in almsgiving! "God rejoices in Heaven," when a poor man receives a piece of bread on earth, "although the poor man is filled with shame at receiving it."[7]

I am not surprised, now, that there were kings and queens, and emperors and empresses, who visited on foot the poorest of the sick, fed, washed, and attended to them with their own hands, and served them even on bended knees, as servants wait upon their masters. Nor am I astonished that many other persons of high position were not ashamed to walk publicly through the streets carrying in their hands a napkin containing food and

Therefore, like pious Christians, we must give alms to the poor joyfully and respectfully.

[1] Amen dico vobis, quamdui fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis minimis, mihi fecistis.—Matth. xxv. 40.

[2] In necessitate constitutus est Christus.

[3] Hic stitit, hic esurit, hic mendicat, hic nudus circumit.

[4] Neque si dederis abolum, aversatur.

[5] Esurivi enim, sitivi, nudus fui, etc.—Matth. xxv. 35.

[6] O quid agit amor pauperis!

[7] Gloriatur in cœlo Deus, unde pauper erubescit in terra.

drink from their own table, that they were bringing to the sick poor; nay, that they were not ashamed to beg for the poor from door to door. Ah, my dear brethren, if we had only a little real faith, if we could only see, as they did, what a great Lord is concealed under the persons of the poor, we should not wonder at all this! And who amongst you, if he saw, as many holy people did, Christ Himself standing at the door begging for alms, would not look upon it as the greatest honor and happiness, to give Him what He would ask for? He would even share the last piece of bread, the last penny in the house with his Redeemer. Nor would he allow a servant to do it; he would run at once to the door himself and bareheaded, and with the greatest respect would give his alms to Christ; as is the laudable custom with many pious Christians when giving charity. Is there one amongst you who would send Christ away from his door, with the customary "God help you," under the pretence that he cannot afford to give alms, or that he wants all he has for himself? I do not think that any Christian could be so hard-hearted. And yet our faith assures us that Christ comes in the person of the poor, and that He receives whatever is given to them. Who, then, should not joyfully embrace every occasion of giving alms, that presents itself?

Christ desires alms that he may reward us a hundredfold for them.

Oh, my dear Saviour, if I had no other reason for being generous to Thy poor servants, but the great happiness of giving Thee pleasure thereby, if I could hope for no other honor, but that which Thou wouldst bestow on me by deigning to take anything out of my hands, certainly I should joyfully suffer hunger and thirst, in order to help Thee with food and drink in the necessity Thou hast taken on Thyself. And do I not owe Thee all that I have, all that I am or can be? But, to return to my subject, Thou dost not ask me to help Thee for nothing. Thou takest nothing from me as a gift, but as a loan, and at interest, that Thou mayest give me something far better and greater in return. Thou actest with us as a father with his child: if he sees that the little one has an unripe apple in his hand, he says: Give me that apple, my child, and I will give you three much nicer ones for it. In the same way, Thou, oh, Lord, askest, nay, implorest, a little from us, that Thou mayest be able to repay us for it, three, twenty, a hundred fold, in this life and in the next. And to make us sure of the great gain Thou hast promised to us, Thou hast given us Thy own written Word, the infallible Scriptures, as a testimony.

Proved by the divine promises.

Listen now, ye of little faith, who are hard and stingy to the poor, through fear of being at a loss by them! The Wise Man already quoted says: "He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and He will repay him."[1] "He that is inclined to mercy shall be blessed; for of his bread he hath given to the poor."[2] "He that giveth to the poor shall not want."[3] "These were men of mercy, whose godly deeds have not failed; good things continue with their seed;[4] their posterity are a holy inheritance, and their children, for their sakes, remain forever; their seed and their glory shall not be forsaken; their bodies are buried in peace, and their name liveth unto generation and generation. Let the people show forth their wisdom, and the church declare their praise." "Honor the Lord with thy substance; and thy barn shall be filled with abundance, and thy presses shall run over with wine."[5] "Give and it shall be given to you."[6] What shall be given to you? "Good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall they give into your bosom."[7] Could any promise be plainer or more certain than this? These are the words of the almighty, infallible, and faithful God; can we doubt that they will be fulfilled, or fear that we shall be at a loss by giving alms?

By the testimony of the holy Fathers.

If, in addition to all this, I were to bring forward the testimonies of the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, to prove that God has promised great rewards even in this life, to those who give alms generously, I should not finish my sermon to-day. They are hardly ever more eloquent than when they speak of this subject. Sometimes, with St. Augustine, they call alms-giving a profitable barter, by which we get gold for lead. Do you wish to make a profit? he asks: "I will give you good advice; learn how to traffic with Christ by means of the poor."[8] St. John Chrysostom calls it a lottery in which there are no blanks, and in which a hundred pieces of gold may be drawn by giving one piece.[9] The same Saint tells us that it is the very best way to grow rich.[10]

[1] Fœneratur Domino, qui miseretur pauperis, etc.—Prov. xix. 17.

[2] Qui pronus est ad misericordiam, benedicetur: de panibus enim suis dedit pauperi.—Ibid. xxii. 9.

[3] Qui dat pauperi, non indigebit.—Ibid. xxviii. 27.

[4] Illi viri misericordiæ sunt. . . . . cum semine eorum permanent bona.—Eccl. xliv. 10-15.

[5] Honora Dominum de tua substantia. Et implebuntur horrea tua saturitate, et vino torcularia tua redundabunt.—Prov. iii. 9, 10.

[6] Date et dabitur vobis.—Luke vi. 38.

[7] Mensuram bonam et confertam et coagitatem, et superefluentem dabunt in sinum vestrum.—Ibid.

[8] Consilium do lucrorum; disce mercari.

[9] Centum hic promittitur eleemosynam expendentibus.

[10] Ars omnium artium quæstuosissima est eleemosyna

St. Clement of Alexandria calls it the breasts of the Church ;[1] which, although they flow daily, yet daily receive new sustenance, so that they may continue flowing, and they never dry up until they cease to give to others.

By experience, because no one has become poor, as yet, by alms-giving.

But I need not go any farther, for we have experience itself before our eyes, to convince us, if we only wish to learn from it. Tell me, my dear brethren, have you ever heard any one complain of being poorer, or of having greater difficulty in providing for his children, on account of alms-giving ? Go through the whole world, ask, if you can, all the poor, what is the cause of their poverty. Do you think you will find a single one who has been reduced to poverty through practising the works of mercy? You will find illustrious houses decayed ; respectable families ruined ; those who inherited great wealth, now begging their bread ; but I need not tell you why. We have cases like that now and then occurring before our eyes, through excessive gambling, through gluttony and drunkenness, through unnecessary feasting, through pomp and luxury, through idleness and laziness ; these and similar things are the tools that make the beggar's staff. Nay, many a one is reduced to poverty by the very means that he used with a view of enriching himself. But I never hear of any one becoming poor through alms-giving. Show me a single instance in which a prudent man can complain that he has been deceived in this respect ; show me, if you can, children who have been impoverished by the charities of their parents.

On the contrary, numbers have become rich by it. Evident from the Lives of the Saints.

On the contrary, I can tell you of numberless cases, in which temporal goods have been increased even miraculously, and without the possessors' knowledge, in the hands of those who gave charity to the poor. Do you wish to hear of miracles ? I venture to say that at all times, almost, and in all places, miracles have happened on account of generous alms-giving. Read the Lives of the Saints, and you will find instances enough in which they, after having given away all they had to the poor, have sometimes found their barns full of corn, their cellars full of wine, and at other times their coffers full of money, although they knew that a short time before they had neither corn, wine, nor money. Metaphrastes writes of St. Gregory the Great that while he was still abbot of a monastery in Rome, a stranger came to him one day, and in a piteous voice told him how he had lost everything by shipwreck, and had nothing left but debts to pay, so that he was in danger of being imprisoned, to the great

[1] Ubera Ecclesiæ.

disgrace of his family. Gregory, moved with compassion, told the cellarer to give him six Roman crowns in gold. A few hours after, the same man returned, and begged more earnestly than before, for further help; the abbot, who could never refuse a poor man anything, gave him another six crowns. A short time after, on the same day, the same man came back a third time, and asked for more. Is it not true, my dear brethren, that many would have lost patience at the man's persistence? But the charitable Gregory spoke to him in tones full of compassion: My good friend, said he, I do not know if there is any more money in the house; but I will ask, and if there is any left, you shall have it. Whereupon he called the cellarer again, and the latter told him that there was no more to be had. Is there nothing that you can sell, asked the holy man? Nothing but a silver dish, was the answer, and that does not belong to our monastery, but to a lady in Rome who left it with us. Then, in God's name, said the abbot, give the man that dish, and I will arrange matters with the lady. When Gregory afterwards became Pope, he used to invite twelve poor people to the table with himself, every day. He one day found thirteen guests, although he knew that he had not invited that number. At the end of the meal, he asked the thirteenth, in a friendly voice, how he came there uninvited. I am he, answered the disguised beggar, to whom some years ago when you were abbot, you gave twelve crowns in gold and a silver dish; I was then only testing your generosity. I am your angel guardian, and you must know now, that in reward of your generosity, God has raised you to the highest earthly dignity, the Papal throne, and has placed so much wealth at your disposal, that you can always have enough to give to the poor. You will see yourself, afterwards, the treasure you will thus lay up in Heaven. Thereupon the angel disappeared. Ribadeneira tells us, in his Life of St. Germanus, Bishop of Antisiodoro, that when he once met some beggars on a journey, he told his deacon to share amongst them all the money he had left, which consisted of three ducats. The deacon, not wishing to give it all away, kept one piece back and divided the other two amongst the beggars. On the same evening Germanus received two hundred ducats as a present. See, he said to the deacon, let this be a warning to you to lay aside your avarice and to put your trust in God; you have not done faithfully what I told you to do to-day; if you had kept back nothing we should now be a hundred ducats richer, and should have received three hundred instead of two.

Confirmed by other examples.

Pontianus tells us of a noble named Zonzinus who was very generous towards those who tried to conceal their poverty, and used to support whole families, by sending alms to them through different channels, so that they did not know who their benefactor was. His steward told him that he ought to moderate his charities somewhat, as he had spent something like two thousand ducats in that way in a few years. Listen, said Zonzinus to him; give away what I tell you, and let me look out for myself; I know well that I shall not be left short. I keep an account book in which I write down every day whatever I give to God in the person of His poor, and also what I receive from Him in return. When I try to balance my accounts, I find that I am always in debt to Him: what I receive is always greater than what I give away. If we ever become even, or if I receive less from Him, then I will think of moderating my charities. In the same way Iodocus, who was descended from royal blood, but who became poor for Christ, experienced the wonderful effects of alms-giving. He, as Baronius writes, lived in solitude on the banks of a river with his companion Wulmar. He never refused to help the poor, if he was able to do so. One day there was nothing left for both of them but a single loaf of bread. He divided it into four parts, and gave one of them to a hungry beggar. The poor man, after having eaten his share, came back a second, third, and fourth time, until he had eaten the whole loaf. Wulmar began, therefore, to complain meekly that their whole meal was thus taken from them, and they had no chance of getting any more bread. Be of good heart, said Iodocus to him, remember that the divine generosity is not yet exhausted. He who can feed the sparrows and the ravens, will not forget us; trust in Him. I assure you that God will either give us food, or He will not permit us to suffer hunger, because we are without it. The event proved his words to be true; for immediately two boats, guided by an invisible hand, came up the river laden with bread, and stopped opposite to where the two companions were. Iodocus took the bread with grateful heart, and he and his companion gave thanks to the divine providence, that had thus so richly repaid them for what they had given to the poor. I cannot refrain, my dear brethren, from relating another very interesting example, that St. Peter Damian tells of a poor but pious workman. He had only a very little money left, with which he intended to buy something good to eat, as he had had nothing but dry bread for a long time. A beggar came to his door, and

asked for charity for God's sake, just as he was thinking what he ought to buy. The poor man then got into a great state of anxiety, and did not know what to do. He thought it very hard to refuse the beggar, and harder still to deny himself the little indulgence he was looking forward to. But charity got the upper hand of him at last, and like the widow in the Gospel who gave her mite, he bestowed all the money he had on the beggar, so that he had nothing for dinner but dry bread. A short time afterwards a servant, who was utterly unknown to him, came running up, bathed in perspiration, to his house, carrying in a napkin forty times as much money as he had given to the beggar. This, said the servant, was sent you by my master; I must hurry away, as he is waiting for me. The man, full of joy and astonishment, wished to inquire the master's name, but the servant had already disappeared. So true is the proverb: "Alms-giving never brings poverty." "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord."[1]

The same thing occurs daily, although we are not always aware of it.

Yes, you think, my dear brethren, but these are miraculous things that happen only to holy people! But, I say they are miracles that occur almost daily, as they who are constantly charitable to the poor experience, for they are blessed in a special, though natural manner. For instance, they get a legacy that they never dreamt of. They gain a law-suit that they had almost despaired of. Their business prospers, or they are freed from losses and misfortunes. They recover lost goods, or get back what was taken from them unjustly, and so, in different ways, that they hardly notice, God rewards them for their charity to the poor. Thus their money comes back to them, as a general rule, with interest, when they lend it to God in the persons of the poor. I myself know a man who used to give his porter twenty or thirty dollars every month to give to the poor, saying to him at the same time: See whether that money will not bring us in more than we lose by giving it. And certainly, frequently during the month, his prophecy turned out true, so that he came to the porter and said to him: Do you remember what I told you? Here is payment of a debt of some hundred dollars, that I had given up as lost; a hail-storm has destroyed all the crops except mine. See what the thirty dollars given to the poor have done for us. Yes, my dear brethren, I repeat: "Alms-giving is the most profitable business of all."[2] Nor can it be otherwise: our

[1] Fœneratur Domino, qui miseretur pauperis.
[2] Ars omnium artium quæstuosissima est eleemosyna.

God is most faithful, and the promises He makes on this head are plain enough. Even if that were not the case, He is most noble and generous, and will not allow any man to outdo Him in generosity. If you do not like to believe me, try it yourselves. Engage in that business for a time, with a lively confidence that God will repay you with interest. "Try me," says the Lord, by the Prophet Malachias, exhorting the people to pay tithes to His temple: "Try me in this, saith the Lord, if I open not unto you the flood-gates of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing even to abundance." [1]

Niggardliness towards the poor is a way of becoming poor.

But if you do not wish to try it, and if you reject my proposal, through fear that you and yours might suffer loss thereby and be brought to poverty, then I tell you, in the name and on the infallible authority of God Himself, that you can find no more certain means of incurring the danger you dread, that is, of suffering losses and poverty, than by being hard-hearted or niggardly towards the poor. "He that giveth to the poor, shall not want; he that despiseth his entreaty, shall suffer indigence." [2] Read the History of the Church by Metaphrastes and others; there you will see how a ship, laden with grain, sank to the bottom at the very moment that the rich lady who owned it refused an alms to a poor man; how eleven ships laden with rich merchandise were wrecked at the moment that their owner refused to give a meadow to a poor man; how the devil, in the form of an ox, ate up all the corn in the granaries of another who had done nothing to help the poor in time of scarcity. Benedict Fernando, a celebrated Spanish theologian, says: "I have seen many children, of rich and miserly parents, who inherited ample patrimonies, reduced to such misery, in a short time, that they had not a servant, nor even a piece of bread: and on the other hand, I have seen many, who were charitable to the poor, grow richer every day, and their children have enjoyed abundant wealth and honors." [3] Sometimes people wonder and complain that with all their labor and trouble, they cannot get on, that they fail in business, and suffer losses and misfortunes. How does that happen? I could easily discover the cause of it with some. I

[1] Probate me super hoc, dicit Dominus si non aperuero vobis cataractas cœli, et effudero vobis benedictionem usque ad abundantiam.—Malach. iii. 10.

[2] Qui dat pauperi, non indigebit: qui despicit deprecantem, sustinebit penuriam.—Prov. xxviii. 27.

[3] Multos equidem vidi divitum et avarorum parentum filios, quibus amplissima obvenerant patrimonia, brevi tempore ad tantam redactos miseriam, ut nec famulam quidem, sed nec panem haberent: Cum contra multos etiam viderim, pauperibus benignos, quotidie magis locupletari, et illorum sobolem fortunis et titulis abundare.

should ask them: Are you generous to the poor? Oh, they would say, how can we give much? We want all we have for ourselves. See, that is the reason of it all. When people are niggardly towards God, and refuse to give a penny to a poor man, they lose elsewhere, through the hidden decrees of the Almighty, twenty or thirty dollars, or more. A laughable incident occurs to me, that falls in aptly enough with our subject: A certain man in Treves lost at cards, one afternoon, a hundred dollars. He came home quite crest-fallen, and as he was leaning out the window, brooding over his ill-luck, he saw his wife at the door, bargaining with a man for some lettuce; after much higgling, she succeeded in knocking a penny off the price. The man saw the ridiculous side of the thing at once, and called out to her: "There you are, bargaining all that time for a penny! You will have to bargain a long time before you save the hundred dollars that I have lost to-day." We might say the same to those who for the sake of a little economy, or through fear of some small loss, turn away the poor from their doors. Save your penny if you wish, but you will have to save a good deal before you bring in what you lose by an unsuccessful law-suit, by an insolvent debtor, by misfortune in business! And so it must be with you, as long as you are niggardly with God, from whom all blessings come. He will be as sparing with you as you are with Him. There can be no luck nor grace, where the poor are sent away empty-handed: "He that despiseth his entreaty, shall suffer indigence."[1]

Therefore, they who have many children, must give alms generously.

What becomes of your excuses now, Christian parents? You say: I have a large family, and a small income, and I cannot give alms generously. What, says St. Cyprian, have you many children? Then you are in all the greater need of prosperity and temporal wealth and blessings, in order to support and provide for them; is it not so? Therefore, invest a part of what you have, so that it may bring you in good interest. You do that sometimes, in spite of your large family, with men who can deceive you. Do you think that God is not able to repay you, if you give your money to Him in the persons of His poor? Does He, who is the Creator and Lord of all things, who has so often and so solemnly promised to reward you a hundredfold for your charity and generosity, enjoy less credit with you, than a mere mortal? Could you place a better Guardian and Father over your children than the Almighty God? Do you think that He cannot, or will not, protect you and yours, although He pro-

[1] Qui despicit deprecantem, sustinebit penuriam.

tects the ravens and the sparrows, that reap not? "What doubting thoughts are these?"[1] Give to God generously in the persons of His poor. "Make over to Him the property that you are keeping for your heirs. Let Him be the Guardian and Protector for your children. The inheritance that is protected by God is in safety. That is the way to provide for your children's future."[2] Have you two children? Then, according to St. Augustine's advice, adopt Jesus Christ as the third, and feed Him at your table. What an honor it will be for you to be the foster-father of the Son of God, to whom you owe everything! What a happiness for your children to have Jesus Christ as their companion, and to be His brothers and sisters by a new title! Have you five or six children, so that you can with difficulty provide for them? Even if another came, would you abandon it? No, you would do your very best to support it, as well as the others. Let Christ, then, be that other child, when He comes to you in the persons of the poor. Do not turn Him away; give Him to eat and drink, as if He were really amongst the number of your children. St. Augustine says: "Amongst the children that they have on earth, let them reckon one Brother whom they have in Heaven."[3] It is not necessary for you to give all you have to the poor, and to keep nothing for yourself. But let Christ have His share. "That is the way to provide for your children's future."[4] Only try it; I assure you, nay, God assures you, that neither you nor yours will suffer any loss by it. The saying still remains true: "Alms-giving never brings poverty. It is the most profitable business of all."[5]

Conclusion. Ah, my dear brethren, I am ashamed to think that I must exhort Christians to be charitable to the poor, by such a wretched motive as temporal gain; as if I wished to make alms-giving a sort of money-making trade. Our thoughts must rise far higher. If everything in the world were lost to us, the eternal reward of Heaven ought to be more than enough for us! But I will treat of this matter especially, on next Sunday. I have begun with the less important so that the more important point might make more impression on you. And now I conclude with the

[1] Unde hæc tam incredula cogitatio?

[2] Illi assigna facultates tuas, quas hæredibus serves; ille sit liberis tuis tutor, ille curator. In tuto est hæreditas, quæ Deo custode servatur. Hoc est charis pignoribus in posterum providere.

[3] Inter filios suos, quos habent in terra, computent unum fratrem, quem habent in cœlo.

[4] Hoc est charis pignoribus in posterum providere.

[5] Ars est omnium quæstuosissima.

beautiful, oft-quoted exhortation that the elder Tobias made on his death-bed to his son: "Turn not away thy face from any poor person, and the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee. According to thy ability, be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care, even so, to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward"[1] in this world and in the next, which I wish you, my dear brethren, from my heart. Amen.

FIFTIETH SERMON.

ON THE USEFULNESS OF ALMS-GIVING FOR ETERNAL LIFE.

Subject.

Generous alms-giving increases the treasures of the next life; it is foolish, then, not to be generous towards the poor, through a desire of saving something in this life for one's self and one's children.—*Preached on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Numquid colligunt de spinis uvas?—Matth. vii. 16.
"Do men gather grapes of thorns?"

Introduction.

"Do men gather grapes of thorns?" Literally speaking, no; that cannot be, because thorns are not of such a fruitful nature. "Do men gather grapes of thorns?" Morally speaking, yes, it is quite possible! By thorns, my dear brethren, Christ understands worldly riches, in the Parable of the 8th chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke: "The sower went out to sow his seed; and other some fell among thorns; and that which fell among thorns are they who have heard, and going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit."[2] We can gather precious grapes of these

[1] Noli avertere faciem tuam ab ullo paupere. . . Quomodo potueris, ita esto misericors. Si multum tibi fuerit, abundanter tribue: si exiguum tibi fuerit, etiam exiguum libenter impertiri stude. Præmium enim bonum tibi thesaurizas.—Tob. iv. 7-10.

[2] Exiit, qui seminat, seminare semen suum; et aliud cecidit inter spinas; quod autem in spinas cecidit, hi sunt, qui audierunt et a sollicitudinibus, et divitiis, et voluptatibus vitæ euntes suffocantur et non referunt fructum.—Luke viii. 5, 7, 14.

thorns, if we plant them in the hands of the poor, by Christian charity; and I have proved last Sunday how generous alms-giving brings temporal prosperity. But it would not be a reward worth considering for a Christian, if he received mere temporal blessings in return for his charity to the poor. Our thoughts must ascend far higher. Alms must bring us in, along with temporal prosperity, a far greater reward. In Heaven, my dear brethren, in Heaven we expect to receive the interest of the money that we have given to the poor. There we shall be repaid a hundredfold, as I shall now further show, in refutation of the excuses of those who say that they cannot give alms, because they want their money for themselves and their children.

Plan of Discourse.

Generous alms-giving increases the treasures of the next life. That is the foundation of to-day's exhortation. Therefore, it is foolish not to be generous to the poor, through a desire of saving something in this life for one's self and one's children. Such will be the conclusion.

Christ Jesus, who goest about amongst us in the person of the poor, and receivest alms to make us rich here and hereafter, rouse the hearts of all to practise Christian mercy, which gives Thee more pleasure than all other works; this we ask of Thee through Thy merciful Mother, and the intercession of Thy holy angels.

He who makes money in a foreign land, ought to send it home as soon as possible, for safety.

When a man goes to India, or any other foreign country, intending to make money there, he does not build a house there nor purchase any immovable property. Why? Because he does not intend to establish himself permanently in that country, but to return home after some time; and therefore, his only object is to convert his wares into money, or to exchange them for something else that he can easily carry away with him, so as to have something that he and his family may live on in his own country. Still more pleased is he, if he finds any one who will give him a bill of exchange for what money he has. To a person like that he is quite ready to give all his wealth, and to pay a percentage for exchange as well. For he does not want his money in that foreign land, but in his own country. Besides that, the bill of exchange is far easier to carry than gold, there is less danger of being robbed of it, and he is just as certain of finding his money on his return home. This was the wise counsel that a citizen of Munich once gave to a Hungarian soldier,

to whom he owed a thousand pieces of gold, that the soldier obstinately insisted on having. I acknowledge the debt, said the citizen, and am ready to pay it whenever you wish. But think over the matter a little. If you get your money here in Munich, you will suffer a twofold loss: in the first place, you cannot bring it home in time of war; soldiers, as you well know, have a keen eye for plunder. In the second place, if I pay you here, I can do so only in copper, on which you will lose a great deal in your own country; but if you are satisfied to wait for the money until you reach home, I will give you a bill of exchange on a merchant who lives in Hungary, and he will pay you the entire sum in Hungarian money, so that you will be at no loss. The soldier was satisfied with this, and he would have been a fool, indeed, if he were not satisfied with a proposal that was so advantageous to him. Suppose, now, that he knew that by his bill of exchange, he could have doubled and trebled his money; what would he not have done? How joyfully would he not have given up all his money, and been content with the bill of exchange for the short time of his journey!

Heaven is our country, to which we must send on our treasure.

Oh, man, says St. John Chrysostom, "place your treasure where your country is."[1] And where is that? Not here, certainly, nor in any place on earth; for we are only strangers and travellers in this life. "For we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come,"[2] as St. Paul writes to the Hebrews. Heaven is the fatherland in which we intend to take up our permanent abode with those who belong to us; and it is only for that object that we live here for a short and uncertain time, in a strange country, laboring to gather together as much treasure as we can, that we may send it on to where we can enjoy it for eternity. "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth; but lay up to yourselves treasures in Heaven,"[3] says Christ to us. His meaning is: It is not for you to lay up riches on earth; it is even impossible for you to do so, according to the present arrangements of divine providence. You can save something for yourselves, but in Heaven, your proper country, and not on earth. Therefore, do all you can, that you may receive your treasure there.

Folly of those who

Therefore, oh, avaricious man, keep a tight hand on your money, lock it up well; do not give any of it away for nothing;

[1] Ibi substantiam colloca, ubi patriam habes.
[2] Non enim habemus hic manentem civitatem, sed futuram inquirimus.—Heb. xiii. 14.
[3] Thesaurizate autem vobis thesauros in cœlo.—Matth. vi. 19, 20.

are careless of this.

let all your care be to save for yourself and your children, and you will probably have enough to live on in this foreign land, this vale of tears. Probably, too, you will be able to leave your children something; probably, I say, because I have already shown from the Word of God, that niggardliness to the poor brings, as a general rule, neither luck nor grace, and causes temporal wealth to melt away insensibly. But suppose that you grow richer by your stinginess, what will you have for eternity, when you begin the journey to your proper country? That which, according to the Psalmist, all men find, who set their hearts upon riches. "They have slept their sleep," are his words, "and the men of riches have found nothing in their hands."[1] You have saved for others, but not for yourself; you have built houses, bought properties, and made money, but in a foreign country, where you have no permanent dwelling, and you have nothing to send before you to your true fatherland. What great folly it is, says St. John Chrysostom, to leave all our property here on earth, although we know that we must soon travel hence! "Thither should we send all our property," or a good part of it, at least, "where we must dwell forever."[2] What good is it to us to heap up riches here on earth, since we must soon leave it, to find ourselves bare and naked in eternity?

The poor are the sailors and merchants that can most safely transfer our property to Heaven.

But, you ask, how can we transfer our possessions to Heaven? Where is the tower that reaches to Heaven, or the ladder of Jacob that we can ascend on, so as to bring up our treasure and place it there? We require neither tower nor ladder, my dear brethren; if we wish, we can send what we have to Heaven in a ship; we can transfer our property thither by a bill of exchange, and we have opportunities of doing so daily and hourly. And what is the ship? Where are the merchants who will make the exchange for us? There are enough of them everywhere in the world. The hands of the poor and needy are ships that, if you intrust your money to them, will bring it safely, without fear of loss, and for nothing, too, to your heavenly country. The holy martyr, St. Lawrence, used those ships when he distributed the goods of the Church to the poor. Hear what he said to the tyrant who asked him where the treasures were: "You ask for the riches of the Church, but you are too late; they are already in another country,

[1] Dormierunt somnum suum, et nihil invenerunt omnes viri divitiarum in manibus suis.—Ps. lxxv. 6.

[2] Stultitia extrema! Illuc præmittantur omnia, ubi et nos semper posthac habitaturi sumus.

and are in good keeping; the hands of the poor have brought them to the treasury of Heaven."[1] The poor are the merchants who can at once transfer your money to the country to which you properly belong; for they act as agents for their Principal who is in Heaven, and they will give to Him, for your benefit, a bill of exchange, which He will pay you a hundredfold, when you come to Him. And this is the usual wish that poor people express when they receive an alms: "May God reward you hundredfold in Heaven!" That wish will at once be acknowledged by the King of Heaven, and will be ratified by His own hand. Christ said to the young man in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "Sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven."[2] If they intrusted the payment of your money to another man, or to a poor person like themselves, I should not advise you, then, to risk your property in their hands, although they gave a hundred acknowledgments for it. If I tried to persuade you to lay up treasure in Heaven in that way, you might say to me, as Nabal said to the messengers that the fugitive David sent to him, to ask him for food: "Who is David?"[3] I know nothing about him. "Shall I then take my bread and my water, and the flesh of my cattle, which I have killed for my shearers, and give to men whom I know not whence they are?"[4] In the same way, I say, might you answer me: Must I then give my money and food and drink as exchange to people whom I know not, and who are utterly unable to repay me?

For it is God who receives it by the hands of the poor, and keeps it for us. Proved from the holy Fathers.

No, my dear brethren, such is not the case with the poor. It is God to whom they give the exchange for you; it is Jesus Christ, as I said in my last sermon, who receives the alms in the persons of the poor, and changes them into an eternal treasure for you. St. John Chrysostom says: "It is Christ who stands at your door ready to receive your alms by the hands of the poor, and to keep them for you; and not to keep them merely, but to multiply them;"[5] so that you may have enough for all eternity. The same Saint, explaining the words: "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord,"[6] asks why God says, "lend-

[1] Facultates Ecclesiæ, quas requiris, cœlestes in thesauras manus pauperum deportaverunt.

[2] Vende, quæ habes, et da pauperibus, et habebis thesaurum in cœlo.—Matth. xix. 21.

[3] Quis est David?—I. Kings xxv. 10.

[4] Tollam ergo panes meos, et aquas meas, et carnes pecorum, quæ occidi tonsoribus meis, et dabo viris quos nescio unde sint?—Ibid. 11.

[5] Est Christus eleemosynas suscipere paratus, et deposita tibi servare. Nec tantum servare, sed et multiplicare.

[6] Fœneratur Domino, qui miseretur pauperis.

eth to the Lord." He answers: "Because God knows our avarice,"[1] and our desire of always adding to our wealth. He knows, too, that no one lends money unless he is assured that he will suffer no loss thereby. "For a creditor requires either a mortgage, or a pledge, or a security,"[2] before he lends his money. Now God sees that the poor can give none of these, and therefore: "He acts as security for the poor man, and as a mortgage or pledge for the creditor."[3] "You do not trust in him, He says, on account of his poverty. Trust, then, in Me, for I am wealthy; be not afraid; you lend to Me."[4] So far St. Chrysostom. "The hand of the poor man is the treasury of Heaven," such are the words of St. Augustine and St. Peter Chrysologus, "because whatever he receives, our heavenly Father takes possession of. And where does He place it? In Heaven; and lest, perchance, you might fear that you would make no profit, you will receive a hundredfold all that you have sent on to Heaven by the hands of the poor."[5] Such is the conclusion that St. Augustine draws. See what interest you will receive: give to God, in the person of His poor, something of your temporal wealth, and you will receive eternal riches.[6] Give Him a little of this earth, and He will give you the kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you give to the poor will be yours and will remain yours a hundredfold, according to God's infallible promises: "He hath distributed, he hath given to the poor; his justice remaineth forever and ever; his horn shall be exalted in glory."[7]

Shown by an example.

When Alexander the Great was intending to conquer the whole world, before quitting Macedon, he caused all that he had to be divided amongst his officers and soldiers; one of his friends reproved him for this, and asked him why he gave everything away, and kept nothing for himself. You are mistaken, said Alexander; "I have kept the best part for myself,"[8] namely, the hope of conquering the world by means of my

[1] Quoniam novit avaritiam nostram.

[2] Petit enim creditor vel hypothecam, vel pignus, vel fidejussorum.

[3] Medium se et quasi sequestrum præstat, pauperi quidem sponsorem, pignus autem vel hypothecam creditori.

[4] Non habes, inquit, huic fidem propter inopiam; mihi crede propter copiam, ne time, mihi fœneraris.

[5] Thesaurus cœli ut manus pauperis, quia quidquid pauper acceperit, pater cœlestis suscipit. Et ubi recondit? In cœlo. Et ne forte perdidisse te doleas usurem, centuplum in cœlesti fœnere recipies, quidquid in cœlum paupere transmiseris perfuente.

[6] Vide quam late crescat fœnus tuum; da temporalia et accipe æterna, da terrena et accipe cœlum.

[7] Dispersit, dedit pauperibus; justitia ejus manet in sæculum sæculi; cornu ejus exaltabitur in gloria.—Ps. cxi. 9.

[8] Plurimum mihi reservavi.

soldiers. Oh, certainly, that was a deceitful and uncertain hope, for it depended upon a changeable fortune! It is a much better, greater, and more beautiful kingdom, my dear brethren, that you may hope for with the greatest certainty, if you distribute your goods amongst the poor and needy. In support of this, I will tell you a far more edifying story: Evagrius, as Saphronius tells us, once heard that Christ had promised a hundredfold, partly in this life and partly in Heaven, to those who are generous to the poor. He immediately brought three hundred crowns in gold to the Bishop, Synesius, to be distributed amongst the poor, and the Bishop gave him a note written with his own hand, to the following effect: "I, Synesius, almoner of Jesus Christ, have received from Evagrius three hundred crowns in gold, and I have promised to pay him a hundred for each one of them. So do I, Synesius, Bishop, promise in the name of Jesus Christ." Evagrius wished to be buried with this note in his hand, and his wish was fulfilled. Three days after his death Evagrius appeared to the Bishop and gave him the note, with the following words added to it: "I, Evagrius, am quite satisfied with the principal and with the interest promised. Everything has been duly paid. So I testify. Evagrius." Another alms-giver caused the following epitaph to be engraved on his tomb: "I have now what I gave away, and I have lost what I kept."[1]

Will be made manifest on the last day to the whole world.

Not to waste too many words on the subject, my dear brethren, I again appeal to the judgment-seat of God, before which we must all appear. For what other reason will Jesus Christ, the Judge of the living and the dead, bestow on the just the kingdom of Heaven, if not on account of their alms-deeds and other works of mercy? And why will He condemn the wicked to hell, if not because they were wanting in those works? He will say: "Come, ye blessed of my Father,"[2] enter into the kingdom that is prepared for you. And why prepared for you? I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was naked, a stranger and sick, and you have given Me to eat[3] and drink; you have clothed Me, and visited Me when I was sick and in prison, and therefore the eternal treasures of my heavenly kingdom are prepared for you. But you, ye wicked, have not done those things; therefore, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!"[4] For it

[1] Habeo, quod dedi; perdidi quod servavi.
[2] Venite, benedicti Patris mei.—Matth. xxv. 34.
[3] Esurivi, sitivi, nudus, hospes, infirmus eram, et dedistis mihi manducare, etc.—Ibid. 35.
[4] Discedite a me maledicti in ignem æternum.—Ibid. 41.

was I whom you so unmercifully turned away from your door, when I asked you in vain for a piece of bread; it was I whom you sent away empty-handed and with harsh words; it was I who privately suffered hunger and want at home; you knew of it, and did not help Me. "Away with you, accursed,"[1] into everlasting fire. And when could that have been the case? Perhaps when Christ was on earth with His poor foster-father and His poor Mother in the cottage at Nazareth. Oh, no; for then but very few would have been able to purchase Heaven by such works of mercy! If that were the case, the majority of people would have reason to make excuses. Lord, what sayest Thou? When have we seen Thee hungry, thirsty, naked, poor, sick, and in prison?[2] We have never had the happiness of seeing Thee. Certainly, the answer will be, you have that happiness every day, as often as you see a poor person: "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me."[3]

To the great misery of the avaricious.

Oh, how the sinner will then gnash his teeth with rage! How the avaricious man will rave and curse the greed of gold that prevented him from helping the poor, when he sees the just going to Heaven, and that, too, because they acted differently to him with regard to alms-giving! Imagine, my dear brethren, that a splendid property is offered for sale; a miser would willingly buy it, but refuses to do so because he cannot knock a few cents off the price; another man comes up, pays the price required, and recovers all his outlay in the first year, from his newly acquired property. How the miser would grieve, then, because he lost such a splendid chance for the sake of a few cents! And so, too, as the Prophet David tells us, will the avaricious and miserly grieve, when they see the glory and happiness of those who were generous in giving alms, as described in the words already quoted: "He hath distributed, he hath given to the poor; his justice remaineth forever and ever; his horn shall be exalted in glory;" while the wicked man, "shall gnash with his teeth and pine away,"[4] for he shall see and shall be angry. With a little money, he will think, which they have given to the poor, those others have acquired the eternal treasures of Heaven! Could I not have made the same purchase as cheaply? The kingdom of Heaven was also offered to me

[1] Ite maledicti! [2] Domine, quando te vidimus?

[3] Quodcumque uni ex minimis meis fecistis, mihi fecistis.—Matth. xxv. 40.

[4] Dispersit, dedit pauperibus, justitia ejus manet in sæculum sæculi. . . Dentibus suis fremet et tabescet.—Ps. cxi. 9.

for sale! Oh, fool that I was! I wished to spare a few pence or a piece of bread, and now I have lost all! It is useless for me now to try to gain that treasure; I shall have no part in it for all eternity! "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God."[1] Such are the words with which Christ concludes the parable of the rich man in the Gospel of St. Luke, who said to his soul: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink and make good cheer," but who had to hear the words: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God."[2]

This shows the folly of those who are hard to the poor, that they may be able to leave more to their children.

And now I come to the customary excuse of avaricious Christians: how can I give alms generously? What will become of my children, and what shall I leave to my heirs? Oh, man of little faith! You ask what will become of your children? Remember what I proved to you last Sunday from the inspired Word of God, that namely, generosity towards the poor is the surest way to gain riches for yourself and your children, even in this life, and that it is the best legacy you can leave your heirs and descendants; nay, that niggardliness towards the poor is the surest road to want and poverty. But I speak now only of heavenly treasures. Supposing, then, that you and your family suffer loss through alms-giving, and that it even brought you to want, which would be contrary to the divine promises; is not your soul of more value in your eyes that your bodily ease and comfort? Are you not of more importance to yourself than your children? Do you not think more of eternal life, than of the short and uncertain time that you must spend in this vale of tears? Ah, God help you, says St. Augustine, you make no difficulty of spending a large sum of money in building a house here on earth, or in buying a piece of land, and you will not give away a trifle to build a mansion in Heaven, where you should live for eternity with your children; you will not part with a small sum to purchase your own country in Heaven! How many prisoners are there not, who say to the judge: Take everything I have, only let me live a little longer! But you do not think: Let Jesus Christ take the tenth, the fourth part, the half of my goods by the hands of the poor, if I can only live forever! You are

[1] Sic est, qui sibi thesaurizat et non est in Deum dives.

[2] Stulte! hac nocte animam tuam repetunt a te, et quæ parasti, cujus erant? Sic est qui sibi thesaurizat, etc.—Luke xii. 20, 21.

ready to give away even the necessaries of life, even your last piece of bread, and to beg for the rest of your days, if that were required to save your life; but you will not give even of your abundance to Christ, that you may reign with Him forever! "Have pity on your soul!"[1]

Such people are cruel to themselves.

What will be left for my children? Are you, then, so anxious to leave your children and descendants something in this strange land, that you are ready to appear empty-handed in the land of the elect, and to be banished from it bare and naked? That would be to disinherit yourself, so as to be able to leave something to others. That would be to hate, persecute, nay, murder yourself, as Salvianus says.[2] If your children get married, you give them a part of your wealth, but you are too prudent to give them the whole of it; you keep the better and greater part of it for yourself, so that you may be able to live decently in your old age. And are you so improvident with regard to eternity that you keep nothing for yourself to live on, when it shall have dawned for you? And what sort are the people you are so anxious about here below? Do you know? No, you cannot know it; and the words of God in the Psalm are still true: "He storeth up, and he knoweth not for whom he shall gather these things."[3] For my children, you answer. "Truly," says St. Augustine, "but for whom will your children lay up treasure? For their children, and these again for their children, and these last also for their children. What have you for Christ, and for your soul?"[4] I am saving for my children; do you know how things will be with them when you are dead? Do you know what they will do with your money? Perhaps they will squander in a short time what you scraped together with a great deal of trouble, and by sacrificing your true riches, nay, they may even use it to offend God. Perhaps they will never be in the least grateful to you for it; perhaps, when you are buried, they will forget you, and not even say an Our Father for your soul. You save up your money for children, who will turn out, you know not how, and for people who must soon die and follow you into eternity, where you and they will perhaps be separated forever. Provide for yourself, then, first of all! "Have pity on your soul!" As St. Jerome advises, you should at least treat

[1] Miserere animæ tuæ!

[2] Non est hæc persecutio, aut esse alia major potest, exhæredari hominem a seipso.

[3] Thesaurizat, et ignorat cui congregabit ea.

[4] Sed quibus et isti servant? Filiis suis, et illi filiis, et tertii filii. Quid Christo, quid animæ tuæ.

your soul as well as your children, and not deprive it of what belongs to it. What you are now storing up is for all your children, is it not? But your own soul should be the most beloved child of all; give it, therefore, the best part; make over your property to your true fatherland,[1] by the hands of the poor.

They often spend their money on unnecessary things, and forget their children.

And what a poor excuse that is; what will become of my children? I know better, and I am quite well aware that you are not always so very anxious about your children that you can find a valid excuse for your hard-heartedness to the poor. For, if I consider your mode of life, I can find no cause for your niggardliness, except your want of faith and confidence in God, or your carelessness of your property, or your idleness. You can spend half the day in gambling, and often lose a quarter, half a dollar, five dollars, or even more; but you never think, then, what is to become of my poor children? If you had given a quarter to the poor instead of losing it at cards, would your children have been any worse off? You can pass the whole day in visiting, walking about, and idling; what will become of your poor children? If you had employed your time more profitably, you could have given some trifle to the decent poor, who have to work hard from morning till night and yet can hardly get enough to eat; and if you had done so, would your children be any worse off? You can dress in the latest fashions, and clothe yourself in silk and velvet, and very often beyond your means, too; what will become of your poor children? If you gave away some of your old clothes for God's sake, to a poor person who has hardly enough rags to cover himself with, let alone to protect himself against the cold, would your children be any worse off? You can give unnecessary entertainments, and press your guests to drink more than is good for them; you can fill your table with the most costly viands, and spend a considerable sum every day on wine, tea, and coffee; you can spend fifty or a hundred dollars in making presents, in order to obtain some honor that you do not want, or in giving balls and concerts; and what will become of your poor children? You should think of that! If you had given away, every day, a part of what was left at your meals, or if you had sent, every month, even five dollars to some poor person who is hardly able to support himself and his children, would your children be any worse off on that account? You can, and it is an intolerable thought, give to your bird, or dog, or other pet animal, abundance of food, and often even dainties, like king Achab,

[1] Ibi substantiam colloca, ubi patricam habes.

who during the three years' famine, was concerned only about how to feed his horses and asses; and what will become of your children? If you had given that food to some poor orphans, who are your brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, in whose persons the Son of God Himself suffers hunger, and who could say with reason: Would that I were that lady's lap-dog, or that gentleman's hound, and I should eat, drink, and sleep better. I should think myself very fortunate if I had what those dumb and often useless brutes frequently refuse through sheer repletion. If, I say, you sent a part of that food to those people, would your children have less on that account? You can afford, and it is a terrible thing to think of, to spend money to avenge yourself on an enemy, to carry on an expensive law-suit against some one you hate, so that you are determined to gratify your hatred, even if you should be reduced to beggary in the attempt; you can find money enough to keep up an improper intimacy, to commit sin, to lose Heaven, and to send your soul to hell for all eternity; and what will become of your poor children? If you spent half the amount on the poor, who, unnoticed on account of their poverty, are to be found in the churches every morning, keep God before their minds during the day, by a supernatural intention, and who would pray earnestly for yourself and your family, if you gave them charity, would your children be any worse off on account of that charity?

They refuse to help the poor, for their soul's sake, because they have many children.

You see now how it is: to gamble and lose money, and have many children; to be idle and have many children; to be extravagant in dress, to spend large sums on useless entertainments, on eating and drinking, to give balls and parties, to feed birds and dogs, to spend money on sin and vice, and to support many children withal; that can be done very easily; but, what a shame it is! To enrich one's soul, and provide for many children, to lay up treasure for eternity, to give food and drink to Jesus Christ, and to provide for many children, oh, no, that cannot be done; that requires rigid economy; a single penny spent on that would be too much. Then, indeed, it is time to think: What will become of my poor children? and Christ is sent away from the door with the customary, "God help you," if He is not turned away from it with abusive words. When the Israelites wished to make a golden calf to worship it as their God, Aaron, thinking thereby to dissuade them from their wicked purpose, asked them for all their gold and silver ornaments. "Take the golden ear-rings from the ears of your wives,"

he said, "and your sons and daughters, and bring them to me."[1] But the people unhesitatingly did as he requested them, and joyfully brought him their treasures. "And the people did what he had commanded, bringing the ear-rings to Aaron."[2] If he had asked as much from them to build an altar to the true God, or to help the poor, he would hardly have received a single ear-ring. Such is the case, too, among Christians nowadays. If a false idol is to be honored, if a sacrifice is demanded by pride, sensuality, love of comfort and the vain usages of the world, or by vanity and foppery, there is money enough, and there are not too many children! But come here, you poor brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, stretch out your hands, cry out your wants, beg in the name of God, and promise a hundredfold reward in the kingdom of Heaven, on the authority of the written Word of God. Oh, there is nothing for you, nothing for Christ! People want all they have; they have too many children and a small income; God help you! Christians, where is our faith? What are we doing to gain Heaven?

Conclusion and exhortation to be generous towards the poor.

I hope that there are no such hard-hearted people amongst you. My design is merely to exhort and encourage you to be more and more generous to the poor. Lay up treasure, then, in Heaven[3] as well as you can, by the hands of the poor. Listen again to what St. Augustine says: "God," when He asks you to give alms, "does not require you to deprive yourself of your wealth, but merely to transfer it to another place."[4] If a friend of yours, he continues, came to your house, and saw that you had stored up all your corn in a damp place, he would say to you: What have you done? You will lose all your corn, after having had so much labor and trouble with it. "You have put it in a damp place, and in a few days it must rot away."[5] "Put it higher up,"[6] in a dry place. And you would follow your friend's advice and store up your corn better. "Do you, then, refuse to hear Christ, when He tells you to lift up your treasure from earth to Heaven,"[7] where it can remain with you forever? With regard to your children and your posterity, you need not be anxious, says St. John Chrysostom: "If you wish to leave

[1] Tollite inaures aureas de uxorum filiorumque filiarum vestrarum auribus, et afferte ad me.—Exod. xxxii. 2.

[2] Fecitque populus, quæ jusserat, deferens inaures ad Aaron.—Ibid. 3.

[3] Thesaurizate autem vobis in cœlo.

[4] Noluit Deus, ut perdas divitias tuas, sed ut locum illis mutes.

[5] In loco humido posuisti, paucis diebus ista putrescant.

[6] Leva in superiora.

[7] At non audis Christum monentem, ut thesaurum tuum leves de terra ad cœlum?

great wealth to your children, place them under the protection of God."[1] Teach them, by word and example, to be charitable and kind to the poor, for that is a property that never remains fruitless or profitless. If they inherit that from you, they are rich enough. If there are any miserly people here, who would rather cut off a finger than give a trifle to a poor person, then I ask them, at all events, to do, for their soul's sake, what the disciples of Christ did, as we read in last Sunday's Gospel, after the four thousand were fed in the desert: "And they took up that which was left of the fragments."[2] I ask those people to do the same. If you are not generous enough to deprive yourself and your family of something, for the sake of the poor, then, "gather up the fragments, lest they be lost."[3] I mean that when you have eaten and drunk your fill, many a piece of bread, or a bit of meat, or a spoonful of broth is left over, that you, in your anxiety for the future, save up most carefully, and that gets lost after all, or is destroyed by the carelessness of servants, or otherwise, so that it is of no use to any one, and must be thrown away. Many a worn-out article of clothing, or piece of cloth has been lying in your house for years, until it is almost eaten up by the moths; make use of these fragments, and give them to Christ in the persons of the poor. Ah, my dear Saviour, I am grieved to think that I must beg such crumbs for Thee! And yet I should be satisfied if I could get even that much, as a beginning, for Thy poor servants! Begin now at once, offer those things to the Lord; He will accept them from you and make you more generous and kind-hearted, so that you will have a pleasure in giving; even for such things as these you can purchase an eternal kingdom in Heaven.[4] Amen.

[1] Si vis filiis multas relinquere divitias; Deo tutelam relinque.
[2] Sustulerunt, quod superaverat de fragmentis.—Mark viii. 8.
[3] Colligite fragmenta, ne pereant. [4] Habebis thesaurum in cœlo.

FIFTY-FIRST SERMON.

ON THE JUST CLAIMS THAT THE POOR SOULS IN PURGATORY HAVE ON OUR HELP.

Subject.

To help the souls in Purgatory is a most excellent act of the love of our neighbor, and therefore all Christians should try to help them.—*Preached on the twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Filia mea modo defuncta est.—Matth. ix. 18.
"My daughter is even now dead."

Introduction.

It is a very common saying among people, when they meet each other: Such a one is just dead ; the man, or woman, the son or daughter, who lived in that house, is dead. And that is generally all that is said about it; no one thinks that he, too, must follow in the same way, and die when his time comes. But it is not of that I intend speaking to-day, my dear brethren. The Gospel of to-day can be very well applied to the poor souls in Purgatory, although the Church defers till to-morrow the special commemoration of them. Do we often think of them? Oh, I could wish to speak now in the most impressive manner, in order to move your hearts to charity and mercy towards those poor souls, and excite you to help them in every way possible, for you would thus exercise one of the most excellent works of Christian charity towards your neighbor, as I shall prove in to-day's sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

To help the souls in Purgatory is a most excellent act of the love of our neighbor ; therefore, dear Christians, let us try to help them. Such is the whole subject.

Mary, Mother of mercy, holy angels guardian, help, by your intercession, and you, holy souls in Purgatory, help us, too, by

your prayers, that we may be all aroused to exercise that act of love towards you!

To help the souls in Purgatory is a better work of charity than helping the living.

It is not necessary for me to prove that it is an act of charity to help the souls in Purgatory, for they are our brothers and sisters, they have been redeemed by the same Blood of Jesus Christ, and created for the same heavenly inheritance that we hope and desire one day to possess; so that there can be no doubt that it is a work of charity to mitigate their pain and to free them from it altogether. I have said that it is a most excellent act of the love of our neighbor, and indeed, it far surpasses anything we can do to help our neighbor on earth. To console the afflicted, to give food to the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick and help in their recovery, to free prisoners and save their lives, nay, even to convert sinners and free them from the slavery of the devil, are indeed great and most meritorious works of Christian charity and mercy; but, says St. Bernard, they are all as nothing compared to the charity that hastens the release of a soul in Purgatory. And why so? For many reasons: The greater the necessity from which one is freed, the less one can do to free himself; the more certain and undoubted the help afforded, the greater, too, is the benefit received by it, and the greater, too, without doubt, are the love and mercy shown. Now, all these circumstances are found to be true in the highest degree of the poor souls in Purgatory.

Because those souls are freed from far greater necessity.

In the first place, they are in the most extreme necessity, in comparison with which all imaginable earthly pains and miseries are but shadows. They are shut up in a gloomy prison of fire, and that, too, a fire which is kindled not by mere natural causes, but by the almighty power of God: in a word, they are immersed in a sea of torments, which differ from the pains of hell only by their being unmixed with despair and by their not being eternal, as I shall explain more at length elsewhere. If you wish to hear a short description of them now, listen to what happened in the year 1590, according to what Father James Hantinus writes.

Shown by examples.

Father Stanislaus, a great servant of God, of the Dominican Order, as he was once saying the Rosary, saw a soul surrounded by flames of fire, standing before him sighing and complaining of the fearful torments it had to suffer for some slight faults; whereupon he asked the soul whether the fire of Purgatory is more intense than our fire upon earth. And the soul answered that the greatest earthly fires are like a gentle and refreshing

breeze compared to the fire of Purgatory. No mortal man could endure the slightest part of that terrible torment without losing his life. If you wish to have a proof of it, hold out your hand. Stanislaus immediately stretched forth his hand, and the soul allowed a single drop of perspiration to fall on it, whereupon the servant of God experienced such intense pain that he fell fainting to the ground, screaming out most piteously and writhing in agony, until his brethren came up and found him almost at the last gasp. He lived for a year afterwards, suffering great pain from the wound that the drop of perspiration had caused him; and he made a point of narrating to every one he saw what had happened, warning them, at the same time, to avoid even the least sin, so as to escape the fearful torments of Purgatory, and exhorting them to help the poor souls detained there, by every means in their power. Father Charles Rosignuoli gives many such examples. I cannot refrain from telling you one of them that is narrated also of a Religious, who was warned on his death-bed by an angel that he would have to go to Purgatory, but would be freed by the first Mass said for his soul. The dying man was full of joy and consolation at the thought of being so near eternal happiness, and he begged of his brethren to say Mass for him as soon as possible after his death, that he might be liberated from Purgatory. His wish was punctually fulfilled; for as soon as he breathed his last on the following day, one of his brethren hastened to the altar and said a Mass for the dead with great devotion. Hardly had he left the altar, when he saw his deceased brother, with joyful, but still somewhat angry countenance. How is it, brother, said the latter, that you have so long delayed to fulfil your promise? You deserve that God should show little mercy to you. Why so, asked the other? Because, replied the deceased, you have not kept your promise; you assured me that you would say Mass for me immediately after my death, and now you have left me a whole year in Purgatory, without you or anybody else thinking of me during Mass. How can that be, asked the other astonished; it is hardly an hour since you died, and I have just left the altar where I said the Mass I promised you; come with me and I will show you your body that still lies in the coffin unburied. When the departed soul saw that, he cried out: Alas, is it possible? How terrible those torments must be, that can make an hour seem like a whole year! Unite with me, brother, in praising the divine mercy, which has freed me so soon from those fearful torments. The writer finishes his ac-

count with the remarkable opinion of St. Augustine, who says that the pains of Purgatory, although endured only for the time that it takes to shut and open the eyes, are worse than those which St. Lawrence suffered on the gridiron during the whole time of his martyrdom. You may see from that, my dear brethren, what a great charity it is to help the poor suffering souls and to release them from their torments.

Because they cannot help themselves.

Again, that charity is still greater, because those souls can do nothing to help or free themselves. There was in former times a controversy between the learned and celebrated men, Bertrand and Benedict, of the Dominican Order, as to whether it was more pleasing to God to perform good works for the souls in Purgatory, or to try to convert a sinner. Bertrand took the latter view, because the sinner was in danger of eternal damnation, while the souls in Purgatory were sure of salvation. That is true, answered Benedict, who defended the other side; but suppose, now, that there are two beggars, the one strong and healthy, who is quite able to work, but is unwilling to do so through laziness, while the other is sickly and a cripple, although he would be willing to work if he could, and is therefore obliged to beg his bread. Which of these two is the more deserving of pity? Which is the more in need of help? Certainly, you would say that the sick man is more in need of charity, than the other. But it is just the same with the subject of our dispute. Sinners are willing captives of the devil, and slaves of hell; they can always save themselves by the grace of God, which is never denied them; but they remain obstinate in their sins; while the poor souls in Purgatory, on the contrary, must suffer the most fearful torments, and cannot help themselves, because no part of them is free, so to speak, except their tongues, with which they cry out to the living for mercy and help: "Have pity on me, have pity on me; because the hand of the Lord hath touched me!"[1] Therefore, well-ordered charity requires us to help them in preference to sinners.

Because help given to them is more sure of being effectual.

And in the third place, we should do this all the more eagerly, the more certain we are that our efforts to help them will be effectual. How often all our trouble with the living turns out to be in vain! How many poor people we try to help by our alms, and they remain as poor as ever! How much labor and trouble we undertake with the best will and intention, to convert sinners and save them from hell, and all is to

[1] Miseremini mei! Miseremini mei! Quia manus Domini tetigit me!—Job xix. 21.

no purpose, because they refuse to listen to us! But if I give an alms for the souls of the departed, my good work is never without fruit; they look out for it with the greatest eagerness, and receive it with the greatest thankfulness; and if, through the divine decrees, it does not profit one particular soul, it will at least help another. Therefore, a certain theologian says, that to give our good works to the living would be like placing our riches in a ship that is sailing over a stormy sea and is always in danger of being lost; while to give anything to the souls of the departed is like investing money at good interest on immovable property, for it is a sure gain to those souls and to ourselves also.

Because we can do them much more good.

Finally, what raises this charity to the highest degree, is the great good done to the souls who are freed by our means from the fiery prison of Purgatory. If I convert a sinner, oh, certainly, I have done a great work, for I have been the cause, or I have given him the opportunity of freeing himself by sorrow and true repentance from the slavery of the devil, and raising himself to the state of grace which is proper to the children of God; yet I have not helped him for all time, because, as is the case, alas, with most people, he may fall again into mortal sin. If I free a prisoner by interceding for him, I have merely given him his liberty, but have not necessarily made him a great man. If I give a generous alms to a beggar, I merely enable him to live comfortably for a week or two, for my charity does not enrich him any further. But on the other hand, if by prayer, or almsdeeds, or works of penance, or hearing holy Mass, I free a soul from Purgatory, I have conferred on it a benefit of infinite worth, which it never can lose, for it enters Heaven immediately on its liberation. When the Emperor Theodosius raised the poor and lowly maiden Athenais to the imperial throne, his act was looked upon as a miracle of love and affection. David thanked the great goodness of God a thousand times, for having raised him from the shepherd's crook to the sceptre, and from the care of sheep to be the king of Israel. But what was it all worth? How much greater and more intense is the charity which gives to a soul eternal riches and happiness in the kingdom of God's glory! If the greatness of a benefit is proportioned to the good conferred, then it must be, so to speak, an infinite act of charity to free a soul from Purgatory.

Which they are always imploring us to do.

We cannot form a just idea of this, because we know nothing of the great happiness of Heaven. But the souls in Purgatory know well what it is to see God, our last End, face to face.

They know what it is to be joined with the angels and Saints in the possession of the most amiable Good, which is also infinite and eternal. They know their own unspeakable desire to enjoy that Good, from which they are now violently separated, and that separation causes them more pain than the fire that torments them. Tertullian mentions Job as a lively figure of a soul in Purgatory. The whole body of that patient man was covered from head to foot with sores and ulcers, but what caused him the greatest sorrow was the fact of his not being able to see his future Saviour. He says: "My eye abideth in bitterness; deliver me, O Lord, and set me beside Thee."[1] Why dost Thou hide Thy Face?[2] As if he wished to say: The greatest pain that I have to suffer comes, O Lord, from the fact that Thou hidest Thy Face from me! In the same way, a soul in Purgatory finds no torment so great as to be deprived of the sight of its greatest Good, and all other torments, in comparison with this, are as nothing.

Therefore they ask the living to help them.

Hence come the doleful sighs that they continually send forth from their prison, to beg us to have pity on and help them. St. Bridget once heard, as she was in an ecstasy, several voices crying out in a most doleful manner: "Oh, Lord Jesus Christ, inspire religious, priests, and good Christians with the spirit of true charity, that they may help us in our torments with prayers, the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and indulgences, so that we may come all the sooner to Thee, for whom we long so earnestly!" As the Blessed Stephana Quinzina was seated praying at the coffin of one of her deceased sisters in religion, the latter raised up her hand, in which was a crucifix, seized that of Stephana and held it so fast that she could not free it, until the Superioress commanded the deceased sister, through obedience, to let it go. During the time, Stephana could hear nothing but the words: "My dear sister, I who was formerly your beloved sister, beg of you to fast and do penance, that I may be allowed to see God." The celebrated John Gerson tells us of a letter that God permitted a mother to send from Purgatory to her son on earth; it is full of woeful lamentations and earnest prayers for help, but it is too long to be quoted here in full; the beginning, written in Latin, is as follows: "My dear child, for God's sake, think of your poor mother! Hear my sighs!

[1] In amaritudinibus moratur oculus meus; libera me, Domine, et pone me juxta te.—Job xvii. 2, 3.

[2] Cur faciem tuam abscondis?

Hear my prayers!" It ends thus: "This is sent to you by your mother from Purgatory."

Exhortation to be charitable to the poor souls.

Christian hearers, what would you think if you received such a letter, or heard the sad complaints and cries for help that those poor souls utter? Would not your hearts melt with pity; would you not try in every way to help those suffering souls by works of charity, that are also very profitable to yourselves? But why should we wait to hear their cries? We already know for certain that they earnestly implore our assistance in their extreme necessity. St. Theresa, as Hantinus writes, introduced into all the convents she founded the pious custom of having all her sisters assembled together on All-Souls' day, after the Mass for the Dead had been sung (according to the custom of the Carmelite Nuns) when the Superior, or Superioress, gave a short exhortation, setting forth the necessities of the souls in Purgatory, and then the whole community begged help for them from the priests of the Order. Each one then mentioned some good work, that he or she intended performing during the year for the poor souls. One presented a long list of all kinds of prayers, another a great number of mortifications, others again so many Masses and Holy Communions, others a great number of indulgences to be gained during the year, and others all the works of satisfaction they should perform during the year, reserving nothing for themselves, but giving it all up in favor of the poor suffering souls. Oh, how those holy souls rejoiced on that day! My dear brethren, we can give them the same joy now. As it is now All-Souls' day, if I were to ask you all, in the same manner, to contribute your share for the relief of those souls, and if I were to go to each one of you to make that request, I am sure that you would all contribute most nobly.

Wonderful charity of pious Catholics to the souls in Purgatory.

If I had before me now those heroes of charity, who at different times have lived in the Church of God, what a noble treasure of alms I might collect! Amongst others, that time does not permit me to mention, there would be the holy Carmelite nun, Francisca, so celebrated for the sanctity of her life, who would offer up all her works of satisfaction for that purpose, not merely for a year, but for her whole life. She had such great compassion for the suffering souls, that she got the name of being their friend, and of being most intimate with them. She used to fast for them the greater part of the year on bread and water; she often gave herself the discipline so as to draw blood; day and night she wore a rough hair-shirt; all her duties, labor,

thoughts, all her difficulties and anxieties of soul, and her bodily fatigues and pains, all the persecutions she suffered from the evil spirit, and all the indulgences she gained, were offered up for the departed souls; in a word, she deprived herself of the atoning power of her meritorious works for the benefit of those poor souls. The wicked enemy who could not bear to see such charity, took occasion from it frequently to make her anxious and uneasy about herself. He represented to her that as she gave away everything, she would have to suffer for many years in Purgatory for her own faults and failings. But all his suggestions could not induce her to change in the least, as we read in her Life by Father Joachim, a Sancta Maria of the Carmelite Order.

Father John Fabritius, of the Society of Jesus.

A still greater generosity would be shown by Father John Fabritius, of the Society of Jesus, who died at Munster in Westphalia, in 1656, and who gave to the suffering souls, not only all his own works of satisfaction, but also whatever he might hope for from others; and when he was dying he made a will in which he left to those poor souls all the Masses and prayers that would be offered for him after his death by his brethren in his own Province, and over the whole world, according to the custom of the Society. Charity can hardly go farther than that.

Father Eusebius Nieremberg, of the Society of Jesus.

Yet Father Eusebius Nieremberg, celebrated for the spiritual books he wrote, found out a still more wonderful way of showing his charity, for he offered himself to God to suffer the same torments that a certain soul was suffering in Purgatory, provided that soul was thereby released. His prayer was at once heard, and he fell into a complicated and grievous illness that tormented his whole body and kept him, as it were, in the midst of a raging fire. While he was in this miserable state, nothing could give him the least relief, and he had to suffer those unspeakable torments for sixteen years, nor had he any consolation during that time, except the thought that he was a martyr of charity, and had thus sent a soul to God in Heaven.

The Blessed Christina Mirabilis.

It would seem incredible, if such a trustworthy historian as Surius did not vouch for it, what he relates in the Life of St. Christina, who was called Mirabilis, the wonderful. After her death she was brought to Purgatory by an angel, and was there shown what the poor souls had to suffer; she was then taken up to Heaven and was there spoken to by God Himself, as follows: Christina, you are now in a place of happiness, in a Paradise of all imaginable pleasures; I give you your choice, either to re-

main where you are, and live eternally with Me, or to return to earth and there spend some years longer in great pain, for the relief of the suffering souls in Purgatory. Christina did not take long to reflect: I will go back, she said, and suffer for the poor souls. Thereupon she came to life again, and began to inflict most terrible mortifications on herself. She fasted, often for several days in succession, without taking the least thing; she threw herself amongst thorns, and scourged herself so as to draw the blood, but even these torments did not satisfy that martyr of charity. She cast herself into the fire and allowed herself to burn there slowly, while God miraculously preserved her life. On one occasion she pierced herself with a sharp-pointed iron. She sometimes suspended herself to a beam by the arm, and often threw herself under a mill-wheel, so that her limbs were fearfully crushed. I cannot bear to describe the other fearful torments that Christina inflicted on herself.

We ought to follow their example, at least in some degree.

What do you think of all this, my dear brethren? Have you the mind to make such a sacrifice for the poor souls? I do not think so; and as the saying is, he who asks too much, will get nothing, so that it seems to me you will say to yourselves: What, torture myself in that fashion? Why, the bare idea of it makes me tremble! No, I cannot do that; but if I give away to the poor souls the patience with which I shall bear all the troubles and difficulties that will arise during a whole year, will not that be something worth while? If I offer up my weekly or fortnightly Communions, and all the indulgences I gain thereby, for their relief; if I offer up all the Masses I shall hear during the year; or if I mortify myself, by getting up early in the morning and attending devotions in the Church, for their sake; or make over to them all my ordinary penances and mortifications—would not that be enough for me? Others, again, are so generous as to give up to the suffering souls all their works of satisfaction of every kind. Do you, then, make those presents to the poor souls, my dear brethren? If so, I accept them in their name with pleasure. Listen, ye poor souls, and be comforted: There is no one, in this numerous congregation, who does not promise you some alms or other during the whole year. And all, when they go home, will exhort the other members of their families, who are not present, to follow their example. We agree, then, to do this, do we not, my dear brethren? Nor have those who give away all their good works any cause to be uneasy, or to fear that they will leave their own sins unatoned for, for hear

what St. Denis the Carthusian writes of the holy virgin, St. Gertrude: After having given all her good works during her whole life to the souls in Purgatory, she was greatly troubled on her death bed by the devil, who was filled with hatred and envy at the thought of the many souls she had freed. Oh, woe to me, she sighed; I am at the point of death, and what will now become of me? How shall I be able to bear the fearful torments that are due to my sins and daily faults, for I have always given away the atonement that I could have made for them, and have bestowed it, with the greatest extravagance, upon the suffering souls! How long and how severe my sufferings must be, since I have no satisfaction to offer for my sins! While she was suffering this great anxiety, Christ appeared to her with a friendly countenance, and said: Be comforted, my daughter, for that you may know how pleased I am with your great love and charity for the poor souls, I now, as a reward, remit to you all the suffering that was still owing to your sins and faults; and, moreover, since I always repay a hundredfold, I will reward your good works far beyond what they deserve, and all those whom you have freed from Purgatory shall come, full of joy and gratitude, to bring your soul to Heaven. Therefore, my dear brethren, keep the promise you have made. Holy angels guardian, remind your charges every day of doing what they have now promised, so that many souls may be thus released from their prison, and may join you in Heaven to pray for us, that when we are called out of this vale of tears we may unite with you in praising, loving, and enjoying God for all eternity. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of All Saints:

Text.

Beati misericordes, quoniam ipsi misericordiam consequentur.—Matth. v. 7.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Do not be surprised, my dear brethren, that of all the countless number of Saints and elect, whose feast we celebrate to-day, I mention only the merciful; for as God Himself tells us that His mercy is above all His works,[1] as the Prophet David says, so amongst all the meritorious works with which the Saints gained their eternal salvation, the most illustrious were the works of

[1] Miserationes ejus super omnia opera ejus.—Ps. cxliv. 9.

Christian charity and mercy; nay, as we have seen already, it is on account of these works that the just will receive an eternal reward on the last day; therefore, when I speak of the merciful, I mean all the Saints of God. Yet I do not intend now to eulogize those merciful souls in Heaven, since that could not add to their happiness. My design is to animate you, and myself also, to imitate here on earth the mercy that earned eternal glory for them. And still I speak of the charity and mercy that we must have for the Saints. For the Saints? Are they, then, in want of charity from us? Do they not enjoy all possible happiness in the presence of God? But, my dear brethren, I do not speak of those; there are other Saints who are sure of Heaven, but who are excluded from it for a time, and therefore they sigh and long for it most eagerly; they are the poor souls in Purgatory, for whom the whole Catholic Church will pray to-morrow; and since there will be no sermon here then, I will act as their advocate to-day, that they may receive our help all the sooner, and be admitted into the number of the Saints in Heaven. I could wish, etc. —*continues as before.*

ON THE MUTUAL OBLIGATIONS OF SUPERIORS AND INFERIORS.

FIFTY-SECOND SERMON.

ON THE DUTIES OF SUBJECTS TO THEIR SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL SUPERIORS.

Subject.

1st. Spiritual and temporal superiors have their lawful authority from God; therefore all are bound to obey them. 2d. They exercise their authority instead of God; therefore all are bound to obey them with reverence.—*Preached on the first Sunday after Epiphany.*

Text.

Et erat subditus illis.—Luke ii. 51.
"And He was subject to them."

Introduction.

The wisdom of the eternal Father, the Incarnate Word of God, the Lord of hosts, Jesus Christ, "was subject to them"![1] He who a short time before was teaching the doctors in the temple, now allows Himself to be instructed by a poor Virgin, and by a lowly carpenter, just as if He were an unreasoning child, incapable of governing Himself! He whose nod the angels in Heaven are ready to obey, according to whose will the sun, moon, and stars keep up their ordinary course, allows Himself to be ruled and commanded by poor mortals, He obeys their will, and directs His actions according to their pleasure! And why did He do that? He was the Son of God who came into the world,

[1] Erat subditus illis.

as He Himself said, to do the will of His heavenly Father in the most perfect manner; and He recognised and honored that Father in the persons of His Mother and foster-father, and therefore He was subject to them. Children, learn from the example of Jesus Christ, how humbly and readily you must obey your parents. Servants, learn from it to obey your masters and mistresses. Christians, you should all learn from it how you are bound to show proper submission to spiritual and temporal authority. I have already treated of the duty of children towards their parents; that of servants towards their masters and mistresses I will speak of on a future occasion. But I have long been seeking an occasion to speak of the third kind of duty, as our holy Founder St. Ignatius lays it down as a special rule for preachers often to exhort inferiors to respectful obedience towards their superiors. That I will speak of to-day, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

Spiritual and temporal superiors have their lawful authority from God; therefore, all are bound to obey them. The first part. They exercise their authority instead of God; therefore, all are bound to obey them with reverence. The second part.

Give us grace to do this, O Jesus; we ask it of Thee through the intercession of Thy Mother Mary, who had authority over Thee, and through the holy angels, who always obey Thee.

Error of those who deny either divine providence in the affairs of men, or the authority of superiors.

We know it to be a fact that there are temporal and spiritual superiors, who have authority and power over others, and who can make laws for them, command and prohibit them, and punish those who disobey; but there have been some who denied that this authority comes from God. In the time of Theodoret, Bishop of Syria, the heathens taught that God is not at all concerned about the world, that He does not govern it, nor interfere with it in any way, and that He has left men at perfect liberty to live and act as they please; while they attributed prosperity and adversity to mere chance, or to the plans of men. They founded this opinion on an argument that should rather have convinced them that divine providence rules the world, namely, on the differences that there are in individuals. Has not God, they said, made us all alike according to human nature? We all come from the one father Adam; we must all leave the world in the same way, by death; why are we, then, unlike in our lives? What is the reason of the great diversity there is amongst us?

Why are some masters, others slaves and servants: some superiors, others inferiors; some have to command, others to obey; some punish, others lie in prison; what is the cause of that? Must we not conclude from it that God has withdrawn His hand from the world, so that he who is stronger and able to overcome others, can command them and make laws for them? We see plainly enough that kingdoms and governments have passed in that way from one king to another, and he wears the crown who, sword in hand, is able to drive away his opponent. Besides, if God ruled those events, the best and most skilful would always be lords and masters; but experience tells us that such is not the case. How could such a perverted order of things come from an all-knowing and just God? No. God remains in Heaven and allows things on earth to take their own course. Such was the opinion of the heathens of those days, who not only denied the existence of any authority in human superiors, but also refused to acknowledge the authority of divine providence. Later on there were certain heretics called Beghards, who taught that Christians were granted such freedom, by Jesus Christ their Saviour, that they need acknowledge no man as their superior, and must obey God alone. The Roman Empire experienced much trouble and disturbance, and suffered much from murder and rapine, on account of that heresy, especially in Germany, during the time of the heresiarch Luther, when the peasants of the different countries rose up in rebellion against lawful authority. It was by means of these disturbances and tumults that Luther established his false religion. The providence of God was maintained, but the authority of lawful superiors was denied. Both errors, that of the heathens, and that of the heretics, are damnable.

The difference between superiors and inferiors is necessary for the general welfare of the world.

It is true that God has made all men alike; true that we are all descended from Adam, and if human nature had remained as it was first created by God, that is, in original innocence, justice, and perfection, there would not be superiors and inferiors, as there now are. There would be no necessity for any one to make or to obey a law, because reason itself would have been sufficient to teach every one his duty, since there would have been nothing in us to contradict its light and its inspiration. But when this happy state was destroyed by the first sin of Adam, that we all inherit, our nature was corrupted, the light of reason was darkened, the beautiful order of things, according to which the flesh obeyed the spirit, and the spirit obeyed God in all things, was

disturbed. Evil desires and inclinations began to rise up against reason and against the spirit, and the whole man, from childhood upwards, was inclined to evil. Under those circumstances it was certainly absolutely necessary to appoint superiors to maintain order amid such confusion, to punish evil, and to restrain corrupt propensities by fear of chastisement ; and of course it also became necessary for inferiors to obey their superiors. What would become of the world without this arrrangement ? If each one were at liberty to do as he pleases, how could men live together in community ? If there is no one to take charge of a clock, and to wind it up at the proper time, what good will it be? It will be merely a box full of wheels, the hands of which will point to twelve o'clock when they ought to point to three. If the ship is without a helmsman, what will become of her? She will be blown about by the winds, hither and thither, until she is wrecked. If there is no general to conduct the war, what will become of the army ? It will simply be a crowd of disorderly soldiers, who work for different aims, and with different intentions. If there is no master in the school to punish the idle and naughty, what will be the case ? The school will simply be a room full of wilful, noisy, and naughty children. Such are the words of the Holy Ghost in the Book of Proverbs: "Where there is no governor, the people shall fall."[1] St. John Chrysostom says: "If you take the rulers out of a state, we shall lead a more irrational life than brute beasts ;"[2] no one will trust his neighbor nor have anything to do with him ; no one will be sure of his property, nor even of his life.

God has made the same order in Heaven.

No, oh, God of infinite wisdom, we adore and acknowledge Thy all-ruling and most just providence, with which Thou governest the world ! Thou art He of whom the Wise Man says: "Thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight."[3] Thou hast created countless hosts of angels, and yet hast divided them most harmoniously into nine choirs, one above the other, and so that one enlightens the other. In the same order Thou hast created the heavens, one in which the moon rules, the other in which the morning star is the chief, the third ruled by Mars, and the fourth in which the sun governs. These again are subject to the fixed stars ; these latter in turn are inferior to the so-called crystal heavens, and all together are subject

[1] Ubi non est gubernator, populus corruet.—Prov. xi. 14.

[2] Si principes in civitatibus abstuleris, feris irrationabilibus magis irrationabilem agemus vitam.

[3] Omnia in mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti. –Sap. xi. 21.

to the superior heaven, so the lowest is ruled by the intermediate, and the intermediate by the superior, like the wheels of a mechanism.

So also amongst men, according to the natural Gospel law.

How much more necessary and becoming is not such order and harmony amongst men! And certainly the God of infinite wisdom has not forgotten it. From the very beginning of the world, He placed Adam over Eve, when He said to the latter: "Thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee."[1] Both man and woman were superiors over their children. These latter had authority over their descendants, so that according to the natural law, one was subject to the other, and all had to live in a certain order of superiority and inferiority. In the written law, when men were divided into different nations, God placed a superior over each and published this command: "Thou shalt do whatsoever they shall say, that preside in the place, which the Lord shall choose, and what they shall teach thee, according to His law, and thou shalt follow their sentence; neither shalt thou decline to the right hand nor to the left hand. But he that will be proud, and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest, that man shall die and thou shalt take away the evil from Israel; and all the people hearing it shall fear, that no one afterwards swell with pride."[2] In the New Law Jesus Christ Himself has also confirmed this, when He commanded the Jews as subjects to pay tribute to Cæsar: "Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's."[3] With these words He wished to refute the erroneous opinion of the Jews, who thought that, as the chosen people of God, they should obey God alone, and not be subject to king or emperor. No, said Christ, that is not the case; no man is exempted from obedience to authority: the emperor is your superior, and you must obey him, and pay him tribute. On another occasion He said to His Apostles and disciples: "The Scribes and Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses; all things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do."[4]

And superiors have

Therefore, according to the command of God, and the testi-

[1] Sub viri potestate eris, et ipse dominabitur. —Gen. iii. 16.

[2] Facies, quodcumque dixerint, qui præsunt loco, quem elegerit Dominus, et docuerint te juxta legem ejus, sequerisque sententiam eorum, nec declinabis ad dexteram neque ad sinistram. Qui autem superbierit, nolens obedire sacerdotis imperio, morietur homo ille, et auferes malum de Israel, cunctusque populus audiens timebit, ut nullus deinceps intumescat superbia.—Deut. xvii. 10–13.

[3] Reddite ergo quæ sunt Cæsaris, Cæsari.—Matth. xxii. 21.

[4] Super cathedram Moysi sederunt Scribæ et Pharisæi. Omnia ergo quæcunque dixerint vobis, servate et facite.—Ibid. xxiii. 2, 3.

mony of Jesus Christ, superiors have lawful authority to govern and command, while inferiors are bound in justice to obey. And whence have they this authority? Not from chance nor accident, nor from the plans and schemes of men, nor from their own strength and power, but from the Lord alone, who is the Ruler of the world, from the Almighty God Himself. Hear what St. Paul says so plainly in his Epistle to the Romans: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers;" and he immediately adds the reason: "for there is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained of God."[1] Mark the words "every soul;"[2] no one is exempted; all must obey their superiors—the wife must obey her husband, the son his father, the daughter her mother, the servant his master, the citizen his magistrate, and all subjects their spiritual and temporal superiors. If you ask who made that law, God Himself answers: "For there is no power but from God."[3] "By Me kings reign, and law-givers decree just things; by Me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice."[4] There are many kinds of superiors: there are kings, princes, law-givers and other men possessing power. Kings are superiors who are subject to no one in temporal things; princes are rulers of certain countries who are subject in some things to a king or an emperor; magistrates and senators have to administer the law; and besides these, there are many others who possess authority of different kinds in different countries; all these have their authority from God. Mark the way in which the Apostle speaks, says St. John Chrysostom: he does not say there is no king, no prince, no law-giver who does not receive his authority from God, but: "There is no power but from God." There are many who assume authority against the will of God, against justice and right, by unlawful means, by violence and the sword, by simony and bribery; such as these are not appointed by God; but once they are superiors, they receive their authority from Him, as well as their influence and power to command.

this authority from God alone.

Hence all subjects are bound to obey them, and to honor and respect the divine authority in their persons. All subjects, no matter who they are, "every soul." What is the meaning of that? I will tell you, says St. Chrysostom, writing on the Epistle

Therefore all must obey them.

[1] Omnis anima potestatibus sublimioribus subdita sit, non est enim potestas, nisi a Deo, quæ autem sunt, a Deo ordinatæ sunt.—Rom. xiii. 1.

[2] Omnis anima.

[3] Non est potestas, nisi a Deo.

[4] Per me reges regnant, et legum conditores justa decernunt; per me principes imperant, et potentes decernunt justitiam.—Prov. viii. 15, 16.

to the Romans: "Although you are an Apostle, an evangelist, a prophet, a priest, whoever you may be, you must be subject to, and obey superior authority, because Jesus Christ commanded His Apostles to show this obedience to the Scribes and Pharisees."[1] St. Paul concludes: "Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."[2] Therefore, Christians: "Be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh with fear."[3] Imagine that you hear God saying to your superiors what Pharao formerly said to Joseph, when he made him Viceroy over the land of Egypt: "Without thy commandment no man shall move hand or foot in all the land of Egypt;"[4] what you say all must do, for they must know that I have placed you over them. How blindly and exactly all the people of Egypt obeyed Joseph, although he was a stranger, and had only recently been freed from prison, and they obeyed him merely because he had received authority from the king! How much more, then, should we obey the superiors who are placed over us by the Supreme Monarch of Heaven and earth! Nay, inasmuch as they use their authority instead of God, we must obey them with reverence, as we would God Himself, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

Superiors rule instead of God.

As we have often seen already, when treating of other subjects, the ambassadors and representatives of a king are entitled to the same honor and respect that is due to the king himself whom they represent. Now all superiors, spiritual and temporal, are representatives of God, and exercise authority on earth in His Name, as St. Paul expressly says, when exhorting the Romans to obedience and reverence towards their superiors: "Fear, for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is God's minister."[5] In the 8th chapter of the First Book of Kings, we read that the people were discontented with Samuel, who had been placed over them as judge, and that they wished to have a king. Samuel complained of this to God, but God said to him: "For they have not rejected thee, but Me, that I should not reign over them;"[6]

[1] Etiamsi sis Apostolus, si evangelista, si propheta, si sacerdos, sive quisquam tandem fueris, etc.

[2] Itaque, qui resistit potestati, Dei ordinationi resistit.—Rom. xiii. 2.

[3] Obedite dominis carnalibus cum timore.—Ephes. vi. 5.

[4] Absque tuo imperio non movebit quisquam manum aut pedum in omni terra Ægypti.—Gen. xli. 44.

[5] Time, non enim sine causa gladium portat. Dei enim minister est.—Rom. xiii. 4.

[6] Non enim te abjecerunt, sed me, ne regnem super eos.—I. Kings viii. 7.

the injustice they offer to you affects Me, inasmuch as you exercised your authority as judge, not in your own name, but in mine. He showed the same displeasure when the rebellious people rose up against Moses and Aaron: "How long will this people detract Me? How long will they not believe Me? I will strike them, therefore, with pestilence, and will consume them."[1] But why, O Lord, dost Thou complain of them? They have not detracted Thee, nor spoken against Thee, nor refused to believe in Thee; they have only rebelled against Moses and Aaron, they have not even thought of rebelling against Thee! But whoever attacks my ministers, attacks Me: I have placed Moses and Aaron over the people, and therefore, when the latter rebel against them, it is my authority they despise; therefore I will not bear with them any longer, "I will strike them with pestilence, and will consume them." In the same sense we must understand the words of Christ in the Gospel of St. Luke: "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me."[2] Therefore, St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "Be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ; as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with a good will serving, as to the Lord, and not to men."[3] For they represent God, and exercise authority in His place, and in His name.

Therefore they must be honored, even if they are of lowly birth.

From all this we must now come to the conclusion, my dear brethren, that we are bound to show the same reverence and obedience to all superiors, no matter what they may be personally, or whether they are of poor and lowly descent, or not. Amasis, King of Egypt, as Herodotus writes, when he saw that the Egyptians did not think much of him, because he was born of poor parents, caused a golden vessel, in which he and his ministers used to wash their feet, to be melted, made into an idol, and exposed to public veneration. When the people had shown it the customary honor by bending the knee before it, he called them together and said to them: "Do you know what that was, which you have just adored? It was a common vessel used for bathing

[1] Usquequo detrahet mihi populus iste? Quousque non credent mihi? Feriam igitur eos pestilentia, et consumam.—Num. xiv. 11–12.

[2] Qui vos audit, me audit, qui vos spernit, me spernit, qui autem me spernit, spernit eum qui misit me.—Luke x. 16.

[3] Cum timore et tremore in simplicitate cordis vestri sicut Christo. Ut servi Christi, facientes voluntatem Dei exanimo, cum bona voluntate servientes, sicut Domino, et non hominibus.—Ephes. vi. 5–7.

the feet in; but since it is turned into a god, you are quite right to show it honor. It is the same case with me: I am of lowly birth; but since I am placed on the throne as your ruler, you owe me as much reverence and submission, as if I were of royal blood." Thus, too, my dear brethren, should we treat all superiors. We must not look at what they were before, nor at what they now personally are; but we must honor, respect and fear in them God, whose place they hold.

Even if they are wicked and contemptible.

We owe honor and obedience to all superiors, although they may be corrupt, wicked, sinful, giving bad example, and are thus more worthy of contempt than honor, for in spite of their unworthiness, they possess authority from God and wield it in His stead. The power that God has given them is not bestowed on their holiness of life, for otherwise how could we know who is our lawful superior, since we cannot see into the hearts of others, nor always distinguish the good from the wicked? It is given to them on account of the office they have to fill, on account of the duty they must perform. Therefore, says Christ: "All things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do."[1] Of whom dost Thou speak, O Lord? "The Scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses,"[2] and those you must obey. But could any one more wicked than they be found at that time? Hast Thou not threatened them with eternal woe in the very place where Thou wast exhorting Thy disciples to obey them? "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Because you shut the kingdom of Heaven against men; for you yourselves do not enter in; and those that are going in you suffer not to enter. Woe to you, hypocrites. Because you devour the houses of widows. Woe to you, foolish and blind! Woe to you, blind guides. Because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish: but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness. Woe to you, hypocrites. Because you are like to whited sepulchres. Outwardly, indeed, you appear to men just; but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgment of hell?"[3] See, O Lord, so hast Thou spoken

[1] Omnia ergo, quæcunque dixerint vobis, servate et facite.

[2] Super cathedram Moysi sederunt Scribæ et Pharisæi.—Matth. xxiii. 2.

[3] Væ vobis Scribæ et Pharisæi, hypocritæ. Quia clauditis regnum cœlorum ante homines, vos autem non intratis, nec introeuntes sinitis intrare. Væ vobis, quia comeditis domos viduarum. Væ vobis stulti et cæci. Væ vobis duces cæci, quia mundatis quod deforis est calicis et paropsidis; intus autem pleni estis rapina et immunditia. Væ vobis: quia similes estis sepulchris dealbatis. Aforis quidem paretis hominibus justi, intus autem pleni estis hypocrisi et iniquitate. Serpentes, genimina viperarum. Quomodo fugietis a judicio gehennæ?—Ibid. 13-33.

of the Scribes and Pharisees; and dost Thou command obedience to such people? Thou hast certainly warned Thy disciples not to imitate their conduct and manner of life: "According to their works do ye not; for they say and do not."[1] Must obedience, then, be rendered to such wicked, impious men, in every command they give? Certainly, answers Christ, for it still remains true: "They have sitten on the chair of Moses."[2] That alone suffices for them to have lawful authority from God, and to command and govern in place of God; and therefore, whatever they say to you,[3] you are bound to do, although you must not imitate their wicked conduct. Christ Himself, the Son of God, the Lord of lords, obeyed Pilate, that most unjust judge, as having authority from God over His person, and He obeyed him with respect too, when He said: "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above."[4]

Even if they are harsh to their subjects.

Finally, we are bound to show honor and obedience to our superiors, even if they are harsh, unbending, and unmerciful to their inferiors. "Be subject," is the divine command, given by the Apostle St. Peter, "to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward."[5] Our Lord Himself publicly acknowledged of the Pharisees and Scribes that they were harsh and froward with the people: "For they bind heavy and insupportable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders: but with a finger of their own they will not move them."[6] Nevertheless, "Whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do."[7] For they sit on the chair of Moses, and have authority from God, and can use it in His stead. How respectful David was to King Saul, who persecuted him so unjustly and sought so often to take his life! He once had it in his power to destroy his cruel persecutor and be fully revenged on him, when he found him alone in the cave, as we read in the 24th chapter of the First Book of Kings; but he allowed him to go away without doing him any greater injury than merely cutting a piece off his cloak: "He secretly cut off the hem of Saul's robe."[8] And

[1] Secundum opera eorum nolite facere, dicunt et non faciunt.—Matth. xxiii. 3.

[2] Super cathedram Moysi sederunt.

[3] Omnia ergo.

[4] Non haberes potestatem adversum me ullam, nisi tibi datum esset desuper.—John xix. 11.

[5] Subditi estote in omni timore dominis, non tantum bonis et modestis, sed etiam dyscolis.—I. Pet. ii. 18.

[6] Alligant enim onera gravia et importabilia et imponunt in humeros hominum: digito autem suo nolunt ea movere.—Matth. xxiii. 4.

[7] Quæcunque dixerint vobis, servate et facite.

[8] Præcidit oram chlamydis Saul silenter.—I. Kings xxiv. 5.

he repented bitterly of having done so, and said to his men: "The Lord be merciful unto me, that I may do no such thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, as to lay my hand upon him, because he is the Lord's anointed;"[1] whom I, no matter how unjustly he treats me, must always fear and honor as God's representative.

Many Christians sin against this.

This should be a lesson for all Christians, who in any way sin against the respect and obedience they owe their spiritual or temporal superiors, and who, although, through fear of punishment, they do not commit any overt act of disobedience or rebellion, yet murmur and complain against their superiors and nourish hatred towards them, or desire to be revenged on them, or curse them, or wish them evil from their hearts, or envy their position, influence, and happiness, or speak disrespectfully of them to others, or talk of their faults and shortcomings in such a way as to lessen the respect and honor due to them; or even go so far as to calumniate them, through sheer envy and vindictiveness, because they imagine their own rights are interfered with, and therefore call them unjust, avaricious, ignorant, unfit for the position they occupy, so as to make others look down upon them. Alas, how frequently that happens! Woe to those who thus set themselves against the authority and order established by God, and who despise the divine majesty in the persons of those who are invested with power! "They have not rejected thee, but Me,"[2] says God to superiors nowadays, with the same displeasure towards disobedient subjects as in the days of Samuel. They have despised, contemned, and cursed Me. They have murmured against Me, and complained of Me. They have spoken against Me and brought Me into disrepute, by their evil conduct towards my representatives, to whom I have given authority.

They must expect severe punishment from God. Proved from Scripture.

Kings and princes are not in the habit of leaving unpunished any insults that are offered to their ambassadors or representatives, but exact full satisfaction, and if they cannot get it otherwise, they declare war against the offenders. And do you think that the great God will allow an insult offered to His representatives to go unpunished? Do you wish to know how deeply He feels such an insult? Read the 11th chapter of the Book of Numbers, and you will see what happened to those Hebrews who

[1] Propitius sit mihi Dominus, ne faciam hanc rem domino meo, christo Domini, ut mittam manum meam in eum, quia christus Domini est.—I. Kings xxiv. 7.

[2] Non te abjecerunt, sed me.

complained of the fatigue they were enduring, and rebelled against Moses, their judge: "And when the Lord heard it, He was angry. And the fire of the Lord being kindled against them, devoured them that were at the uttermost part of the camp."[1] The same thing happened to Core, Dathan, and Abiron, when they tried to excite the people against Moses by their murmurs and complaints: "The earth broke asunder under their feet, and opening her mouth, devoured them with their tents and all their substance. And they went down alive into hell, the ground closing upon them, and they perished from among the people."[2] And so it happened also to the Jews when they began to murmur against Moses and Aaron, on account of their long sojourn in the desert: "Wherefore the Lord sent among the people fiery serpents, which bit them and killed many of them."[3] And what is still more surprising is what we read in the 12th chapter of the Book of Numbers about Mary, the sister of Moses. She had a spite against him and spoke of him as she should not, not publicly, nor amongst the people, but merely with her brother Aaron. And God was so angry with her that He immediately smote her with leprosy, so that she had to be separated from the people: "And behold Mary appeared white as snow with leprosy."[4] Yes, and although Moses otherwise used to obtain all he asked from God, even when he besought the Lord to pardon the idolatry and other grievous crimes the people were guilty of, yet in this instance his prayer for Mary was not heard: "And Moses cried to the Lord, saying, O God, I beseech Thee, heal her."[5] But God refused to grant his prayer, and said to him: "If her father had spit upon her face, ought she not to have been ashamed for seven days at least? Let her be separated seven days without the camp. . . . Mary was therefore put out of the camp."[6] Christian hearers, we do not hear nowadays of any such terrible punishment being inflicted upon those who murmur against their superiors. Otherwise the world would witness sad tragedies every day. But listen again

[1] Quod cum audisset Dominus, iratus est. Et accensus in eos ignis Domini devoravit extremam castrorum partem.—Num. xi. 1.

[2] Dirupta est terra sub pedibus eorum, et aperiens os suum devoravit illos cum tabernaculis suis, et universa substantia eorum. Descenderuntque vivi in infernum, operti humo, et perierunt de medio multitudinis.—Ibid. xvi. 31–33.

[3] Quamobrem misit Dominus in populum ignitos serpentes, etc.—Ibid. xxi. 6.

[4] Et ecce Maria apparuit candens lepra quasi nix.—Ibid. xii. 10.

[5] Clamavitque Moyses ad Dominum, dicens: Deus, obsecro, sana eam.—Ibid. 13.

[6] Si pater ejus spuisset in faciem illius, nonne debuerat saltem septem diebus rubore suffundi? Separetur septem diebus extra castra. . . . Exclusa est itaque Maria extra castra.—Ibid. 14, 15.

to the words that St. Paul writes to the Romans: "He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."[1] And what has such a one to expect? "They that resist purchase to themselves damnation."[2]

Conclusion and exhortation to obey superiors with respect.

My conclusion is, in the words of St. Peter, be subject to your masters and to all superiors,[3] at all times, in all places, under all circumstances, privately as well as publicly, with proper respect and reverence, as to God Himself, because they have their authority from God, and they exercise it in His stead. Honor and fear them, yet not so much them, as God in their person. Honor and obey them for God's sake, whose holy will and commandment is that you honor and obey them. But if you sometimes complain of and murmur against your superiors, think to yourselves at once, with humble reverence: They are God's representatives, and they must be honored as God Himself. Honor and obey them for the love of Jesus Christ, who gives us an example of the most humble obedience, not only towards His poor Mother and foster-father, but also towards those who had spiritual or temporal authority in His time on earth. Honor them with a ready and constant obedience, unless they command you to do anything against the will of God, so that you may reap the exceeding great reward of obedience in the kingdom of God's elect, where all superiority will be at an end, and where, as the Prophet Isaias says, "and the Lord alone shall be exalted,"[4] to whom we shall all become like when we see Him as He is, and with whom we shall live and reign forever. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Fourth Sunday in Advent:

Text.

Anno quinto decimo imperii Tiberii Cæsaris, procurante Pontio Pilato Judæam, factum est verbum Domini super Joannem.— Luke iii. 1, 2.

"In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, the Word of the Lord was made unto John."

What could have been the reason, my dear brethren, that the Scripture notes so exactly, and gives the names of the temporal

[1] Qui resistis potestati, Dei ordinationi resistit.
[2] Qui autem resistunt, ipsi sibi damnationem acquirunt.
[3] Subditi estote in omni timore dominis. [4] Elevabitur Dominus solus. — Isai. ii. 17.

and spiritual authorities of the time, for of course the Word of God says nothing without a reason? It tells us in the text quoted who the emperor was, who was governor of Judea, who was prince of Galilee, Iturea and Abilina, and who were the high priests in Jerusalem. And these were all men who did not deserve to have their names recorded in the written Word of God. Tiberius was a heathen, Pontius Pilate an unjust judge, Herod, Philip, and Lysanias were just as bad; Annas and Caiphas were wicked priests, as they showed afterwards, when, through sheer hatred and envy, they condemned the Son of God to be crucified. Why, then, are their names written in the Bible? Perhaps to mark the time at which John commenced to preach penance. Yes, but it would have been enough for that purpose to mention merely the year of the reign of Tiberius. It seems to me that there is another mysterious meaning hidden under these words; for it was a general error amongst the Jews of that time to look upon themselves as not being bound to obey any foreign king or emperor, since they were the chosen people of God, and had received their law immediately from Him. This error is refuted by to-day's Gospel, which proves that the emperor, as well as certain princes, governors, and high priests, had authority over them at that time. And in all probability, too, God wished to show that all must honor their superiors, although the latter may be heathens, or unjust or wicked men. These considerations, my dear brethren, have given me the opportunity that I have been seeking for a long time, namely, that of speaking of the obligations of inferiors towards their superiors; and all the more so, since our holy Founder, St. Ignatius, etc.—*continues as before.*

FIFTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON THE DUTIES OF THE LAITY TOWARDS PRIESTS.

Subject.

The priests of Jesus Christ must be held in the highest honor by all.—*Preached on the thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Ite, ostendite vos sacerdotibus.—Luke xvii. 14.
"Go, show yourselves to the priests."

Introduction.

In almost every part of the Gospel in which we read of the miraculous cures of leprosy effected by Jesus Christ, we read also that He sent those whom He healed to the priests. Thus, in the 8th chapter of St. Matthew, when the leper said to Him: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean," and Jesus answered: "I will, be thou made clean." He told him to tell no one, but commanded him, at the same time, to go to the priest: "Go, show thyself to the priest."[1] And why was that? "To prove that He wished to honor priests,"[2] as St. Jerome says. Such is also the opinion of St. Thomas Aquinas. Speaking of the law mentioned in the 14th chapter of Leviticus, in which God commands the priests to say whether a leper was made clean or not so that the latter might again live amongst the people in case he was cured, the Saint asks: How was it, if the priest was wrong in his judgment, as was doubtless often the case? He answers: "If the priest was mistaken in his judgment, the leprosy was healed miraculously by the legal observances."[3] See how highly God esteems the priestly dignity, so that He is ready to cover the mistakes of the priest by a miracle, rather than let them be lowered in the people's estimation. Christian hearers, if God chose to hold the imperfect priesthood of the Old Law in such honor, what are we to think of the perfect priesthood of the New Law?

[1] Vade, ostende te sacerdoti.—Matth. viii. 4. [2] Ut sacerdotibus deferre honorem videatur.
[3] Contingebat, ut divino miraculo per ritum legis lepra corporalis mundaretur, quando sacerdos in judicio decipiebatur.

It is of this that I will speak to-day, to the honor and glory of Jesus Christ, for it is a matter in which many Christians err grievously.

Plan of Discourse.

The priests of Jesus Christ, no matter what sort they are, must be held in the highest honor by all. Such is the whole subject.

Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, who wishest to be honored in the persons of Thy anointed priests, enlighten our understandings, that we may see this truth, and henceforth honor Thee and Thine as we ought. We ask this grace of Thee through the merits of Thy Mother Mary and the holy angels guardian.

Three reasons which make one deserving of honor.

"Honor to whom honor is due,"[1] writes St. Paul to the Romans. But honor is due to a person for different reasons, either on account of the high position and dignity that God has given him above others, and thus a king or prince is deserving of far greater honor than what is due to an ordinary citizen, although the latter may be a very rich man; or on account of the excellence of the office he fills, and thus the judge must be honored above a lawyer or clerk; or on account of the person whom he represents; thus the ambassadors and plenipotentiaries of a king have a right to the same honor that would be shown to their royal master, although they may be of lowly birth; and indeed it is often the case that the lowly born succeed in raising themselves to such a position that they are sent by their sovereign on embassies. All this is a well-known fact.

Priests are entitled to honor for all three reasons.

Oh, priests of the Lord, it is not without cause that people give to you alone the distinguishing title of reverend, very reverend, or most reverend![2] You have every right to those titles, and to the honor and respect that people show you thereby! For, if I consider the dignity to which God has raised you, I can hardly find a greater in the whole world; if I consider the duty you have to perform, not only must I honor you above men, but above the angels; if I look at the Person whom you represent, there is none greater in Heaven nor on earth.

On account of their dignity.

And in the first place, let us hear what the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures says of the dignity of priests: it calls them the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the trumpets of the Lord, the walls and pillars of the Church, the gate of Heaven,

[1] Cui honorem, honorem.—Rom. xiii. 7.
[2] Reverendi, admodum reverendi, reverendissimi!

the privy-councillors and courtiers of God, kings, angels of the Lord, gods on earth. The Prophet Joel says: "Between the porch and the altar, the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep."[1] Therefore, in processions they always walk next to the Blessed Sacrament, just as courtiers are accustomed to do with their sovereigns, while the people walk behind them, as lackeys do with their king. "But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood."[2] Hence St. Ambrose and other holy Fathers maintain that the priesthood far excels the dignity of royalty. St. Ambrose says: "If you compare the priestly dignity with that of a king, you will find that the former exceeds the latter more than gold does lead."[3] The holy Martyr St. Ignatius, in his Epistle to the Christians at Smyrna, tells them to observe the following order: "Honor is due, first of all, to God, then to priests, and after them to kings."[4] The Prophet Malachias calls them angels: "For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth, because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts."[5] Nay, God Himself gives them a divine name, for in addition to other passages, we read in the Book of Exodus: "Thou shalt not speak ill of the gods, and the prince of the people thou shalt not curse."[6] St. Paul says, in the Acts of the Apostles, 23d chapter, that these words are to be understood of priests; and therefore he calls the injurious words that the Jews used towards himself and the other Apostles, real blasphemies: "We are blasphemed and we entreat."[7] What more proof do we require? It should suffice for us to know that when the Eternal Father wished to make known the glory of His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, He gave Him this title and confirmed it with an oath: "The Lord hath sworn and He will not repent; thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech."[8] Such was the oath sworn by the great God. Could there be anything greater said or imagined of the dignity of the priesthood?

[1] Inter vestibulum et altare plorabunt sacerdotes, ministri Domini.—Joel ii. 17.

[2] Vos autem genus electum, regale sacerdotium.—I. Pet. ii. 9.

[3] Si sacerdotalem dignitatem regum fulgori compares, longe erit inferius quam si plumbi metallum ad auri fulgorem compares.

[4] Primo loco Deo debetur honor, secundo sacerdotibus, tertio regibus.

[5] Labia enim sacerdotis custodient scientiam, et legem requirent ex ore ejus, quia angelus Domini exercituum est.—Malach. ii. 7.

[6] Diis non detrahes, et principi populi tui non maledices.—Exod. xxii. 28.

[7] Blasphemamur et obsecramus.—I. Cor. iv. 13.

[8] Juravit Dominus, et non pœnitebit eum: tu es sacerdos in æternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech.—Ps. cix. 4.

Do you think, my dear brethren, that I have said too much and made too much of the priesthood? If you do, then consider the other source of dignity: see what an office and duty the priest has to perform. You will then see clearly enough that what I have said up to this, of the dignity of the priesthood, is really true. In what does the priestly office consist? In teaching men and showing them the right way to Heaven, in acting as mediators between God and man, and in something far more excellent still, which is the twofold power that is given to every priest in his ordination, and which imprints an indelible character on his soul, the power that he has over the souls of Christians, and that which he has over the Body and Blood of Christ. On account of the office they hold.

Priests alone have power over the souls of Christians in the sacramental tribunal of Penance, in which they, as judges with full powers, pronounce judgment with regard to the souls, even of emperors, kings, and rulers, and declare them to be either true children of God and in His grace and friendship, or slaves of the devil, groaning under the yoke of sin, and thus decide whether they belong to Heaven, or to hell; for to priests alone do Christ and His representatives say: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."[1] Oh, ye mighty princes of Heaven, angels and archangels, here you must yield to poor mortals! You can move Heaven and earth at the nod of your Creator, you can turn the whole world in any direction, you can put to flight all the legions of the evil spirit; but you cannot say to a sinner and an enemy of God: "I absolve thee from thy sins;"[2] I forgive the evil thou hast done, I restore to thee the sanctifying grace that thou hast lost, and make thee again the friend of God; I free thee from the flames of hell, and make thee an heir to Heaven; that, you must kindly acknowledge, is beyond your power. "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" was the question that the Pharisees in astonishment asked our Lord, when they heard Him say to the man sick of the palsy: "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." How? they asked in surprise; "who can forgive sins, but God alone?"[3] Certainly I can do it, although I am only a sinful man, and so can every priest, no matter how poor and lowly he may be in the eyes of the world. For they have power over the souls of Christians.

[1] Accipite Spiritum Sanctum: quorum remiseritis peccata remittuntur eis, et quorum retinueritis, retenta sunt.—John xx. 22, 23.

[2] Ego te absolva peccatis tuis.

[3] Homo remittuntur tibi peccata tua. Quis potest dimittere peccata, nisi solus Deus?—Luke v. 20, 21.

"What power on earth can be greater than this?"[1] asks St. John Chrysostom.

Nay, over God Himself.

But the priest has a still greater power, not merely over the souls of men, but over the Almighty God Himself, in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, for as often as he pleases, he can offer the Son of God to His heavenly Father, and with a few words he can change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. Where is the angel in Heaven, or the other man on earth to whom God has given such power? The world still wonders at the Prophet Elias, who could make fire come down from Heaven in obedience to his command; at Josue, who commanded the sun to stand still, and who was obeyed; at different Saints at whose command mountains changed their position. But what are all these miracles compared to what the priest does at the altar daily? He need say only the four little words: "This is my body,"[2] and behold, the great God of Heaven and earth is obedient to his voice. Jesus Christ comes down upon earth with His divinity and humanity, body and soul, and is present wherever and whenever the priest wishes. St. Ambrose compares the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, to the creation of the world; for just as before the creation there was neither Heaven nor earth, nor any creature, and all things were called into existence by the word of the Almighty God, "let it be,"[3] "he spoke and they were made,"[4] in the same way, before the consecration there is nothing in the Host but the substance of bread, and when the priest says the words, "This is my body," the bread is annihilated, and the Body of Christ takes its place. Yet there is this difference between the divine "let it be," and the words of the priest, that the former created all things, while the latter bring forth, so to speak, Him of whom St. John says: "All things were made by Him."[5] Now, since St. Anselm, too, does not hesitate to say that in the Incarnation God gave greater power to the words in which Mary signified her consent to that mystery, when she said, "Be it done," than to His own *fiat* in creation of the world, since the latter brought forth mere creatures, while the former brought forth the Creator Himself,[6] we may say, for the same reason, that Christ has given to the words of the priest the same power that He gave to those of His own most holy Mother, and therefore

[1] Quænam, obsecro, potestas hac una major esse potest?
[2] Hoc est corpus meum. [3] Fiat. [4] Ipse dixit et facta sunt.—Ps. cxlviii. 5.
[5] Omnia per ipsum facta sunt. [6] Majus aliquid Deus attribuit Fiat virginis quam suo

the words of the priest in the consecration have greater power than the *fiat* of God in the creation of the world. Could any office be greater or more divine than this, my dear brethren? St. Ephraim, when he thinks of it, cries out: "Great, immense, infinite, is the dignity of the priest!"[1]

On account of the Person whom they represent.

Finally, who is the Person whom priests represent? It is again the highest Person in Heaven and on earth, Jesus Christ the Eternal Son of God. Hear what St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: "For Christ we are ambassadors, God, as it were, exhorting by us."[2] Christ Himself says to priests: "As the Father sent Me, so I also send you,"[3] in my stead: "he that heareth you heareth Me, he that despiseth you despiseth Me."[4] What the priest does outwardly, Christ does inwardly, and all is done in the Person of Christ. The priest says in the confessional: "I absolve thee from thy sins;"[5] he says at the altar, during holy Mass: "This is my body, this is the chalice of my blood;"[6] nor can he say those words otherwise than as a plenipotentiary and ambassador of Jesus Christ, just as if Jesus Christ Himself spoke them, for if He spoke them in his own person they would evidently be false and untrue, since it is quite clear that the body and blood of the priest are not hidden under the appearances of bread and wine. You may see from this that no dignity can exceed that of the priest, that no power can be more excellent, that no person can be greater than He whom the priest represents. Oh, priests of Jesus Christ! I tremble when I consider what an extraordinary and edifying life is required in us by the dignity of the state to which God has raised us! What an angelical, pure, and chaste life is required by the office we fill! What a holy and heavenly life by the Person whom we represent! Ah, think of this daily, and be convinced that your lives ought to be a source of edification to all men, as St. Augustine says, speaking of priests: "Their lives should be a constant source of instruction and a continual exhortation to holiness for others."[7]

They must therefore be held in great esteem.

But I am not preaching now to priests, but to you, Christian hearers; learn from this how you must respect and reverence all priests. The command that God gives by the Wise Ecclesiasti-

[1] Magna, immensa, infinita dignitas sacerdotis!
[2] Pro Christo legatione fungimur, tamquam Deo exhortante per nos.—II. Cor. v. 20.
[3] Sicut misit me pater, et ego mitto vos.—John xx. 21.
[4] Qui vos audit me audit, qui vos spernit, me spernit.
[5] Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis.
[6] Hoc est corpus meum; hic est calix sanguinis mei.
[7] Illorum vita aliorum debet esse eruditio et assidua salutis exhortatio.

cus, is: "With all thy soul fear the Lord, and reverence His priests;"[1] that is, esteem them as the consecrated of the Lord. This was understood even of the priests in the Old Law, who only foreshadowed and prefigured our priesthood of the New Law; just as their sacrifices were mere figures of our most holy sacrifice of the Mass, and of the sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ. And yet, in what great honor they were held!

Men used to show great honor to the priests of the Old Law.

By divine command, priests were forbidden even to uncover their heads in presence of the people; as we read in the 21st chapter of Leviticus: "The high-priest, upon whose head the oil of unction hath been poured, and whose hands have been consecrated for the priesthood, and who hath been vested with the holy vestments, shall not uncover his head."[2] Lyranus tells us that priests were allowed to marry into the royal family. The highest court of justice, from which no appeal was allowed, was that of the priesthood alone, according to the divine command: "But he that will be proud and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest, who ministereth at the time to the Lord thy God,... that man shall die."[3] The very name and presence of the priest inspired all with reverence and respect. When Anna, the mother of the Prophet Samuel, was praying with bitter tears in the temple at Jerusalem, that God might take away her barrenness, the high-priest Heli came in, and thinking she was intoxicated, he said to her the reproachful words: "How long wilt thou be drunk? digest a little of the wine of which thou hast taken too much."[4] Certainly, that was a great calumny, as St. John Chrysostom says; it was a shameful crime of which to accuse a good, innocent, and respectable woman, who had already sorrow enough to bear, and had sufficient reason therefore to be very angry. In our days we should not expect any woman to bear patiently such a grievous insult, without making any effort to defend her good name and to prove her innocence. She would soon find words enough to defend herself. But how did Anna act in those circumstances? She thought to herself: It is a priest who is speaking to me; and therefore she answered in a humble manner, with down-cast eyes and the greatest reverence:

[1] In tota anima tua time Dominum, sacerdotes illius sanctifica.—Eccl. vii. 31.

[2] Pontifex, super cujus caput fusum est unctionis oleum, et cujus manus in sacerdotio consecratæ sunt, vestitusque est sanctis vestibus, caput suum non discooperiet.—Levit. xxi. 10.

[3] Qui autem superbierit, nolens obedire sacerdotis imperio, qui eo tempore ministrat Domino Deo tuo . . . morietur homo ille.—Deut. xvii. 12.

[4] Usquequo ebria eris? digere paulisper vinum, quo mades.—I. Kings i. 14.

"Not so, my lord, for I am an exceeding unhappy woman, and have drunk neither wine, nor any strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thy handmaid for one of the daughters of Belial."[1] Mark, my dear brethren, how she calls him her lord, and herself his handmaid: "Would to God thy handmaid may find grace in thy eyes."[2] So great was the respect she had for one who unjustly accused her, because he was a priest of God! St. Paul, although he knew that the Jewish priesthood had ceased, and had become a mere empty name, had still a great respect for it; for when he was beaten on the mouth by order of Ananias the priest, he said, full of zeal for the glory of God: "God shall strike thee, thou whited wall. For sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and contrary to the law commandest me to be struck?"[3] What? asked the bystanders: "Dost thou revile the high-priest of God?"[4] Whereupon St. Paul was shocked and excused himself humbly, saying: "I knew not, brethren, that he is the high-priest. For it is written: Thou shalt not speak evil of the prince of thy people."[5]

Nay, even by Christ Himself.

Even Christ Himself was always very respectful to the Jewish priests, although He knew their hypocrisy and impiety. We read in the 2d chapter of the Gospel of St. John that He made a scourge and with it drove out of the temple those who were profaning it. And who were they? "Buyers and sellers."[6] Why not rather the priests, who were really to blame for the desecration of the temple, and who tried to make profit for themselves out of it? No, He left them alone because they were priests, so as to show the people the respect He had for the bare name of priest. Once only did the meek Saviour complain as He stood before His judge, and that was when He received a blow on the cheek. He asked the servant of the high-priest: If I have spoken well, "why dost thou strike Me?"[7] Strange, indeed, that Jesus, who bore so many injuries and insults, and even the terrible scourging, the crown of thorns, and the nails, without opening His mouth, should complain of being unjustly struck on the cheek! Why was that? Not, as interpreters of the Holy

[1] Nequaquam domine mi etc. . . . . Ne reputes ancillam tuam quasi unam de filiabus Belial.—I. Kings i. 15, 16.

[2] Utinam inveniat ancilla tua gratiam in oculis tuis.—Ibid. 18.

[3] Percutiet te Deus, paries dealbata. Et tu sedens judicas me secundum legem, et contra legem jubes me percuti?—Act. xxiii. 3.

[4] Summum sacerdotem Dei maledicis?—Ibid. 4.

[5] Nesciebam fratres, quia princeps est sacerdotum. Scriptum est enim: principem populi tui non maledices.—Ibid. 5.

[6] Vendentes et ementes. [7] Quid me cædis?—John xviii. 23.

Scriptures tell us, merely because that blow was struck unjustly, for His scourging, crowning with thorns, and crucifixion were still more unjust; but because He was struck on the pretext of His having been disrespectful to the high-priest, for the servant who gave Him the blow, said: "Answerest Thou the high-priest so?"[1] That deserves a blow! Jesus could not bear to be accused of irreverence towards the priest, and therefore, lest any one should be scandalized in that respect, or take occasion from that false accusation, of being irreverent towards priests, He said: "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil;[2] but if well, why strikest thou Me," as if I had been guilty of saying anything disrespectful?

How much more honor is due to the priests of the New Law.

And from that I must again conclude, my dear brethren, that if the priests of the Old Law were by divine command held in the highest esteem by all the people, if the Apostles and Jesus Christ Himself showed such respect towards them, although they only foreshadowed the priesthood of the New Law, and even when their priesthood had altogether ceased, what honor, then, must we not show to the true and holy priesthood of Jesus Christ, and to His priests in the New Law, who are invested with such a great dignity, and who represent the Person of the Holiest of the holy!

Good Christians acknowledge that.

It is that thought that makes good and pious Christians humble themselves in the presence even of poor and lowly priests. St. Anthony the Great, whenever he met a priest, used to throw himself down on his knees, kiss the priest's hand respectfully and remain there until he got his blessing. St. Catherine of Siena thought herself unworthy of kissing the priest's hand, but she used to kiss the ground on which he walked. In the General Council of Matiscona a special decree was made to the effect that if a layman on horseback met a priest walking, he should at once dismount in order to show his respect for the sacerdotal character, as Baronius writes of the year 588. The story of the holy Bishop Maxentius is well known: he was invited to table by Maximus the Emperor, and he brought with him as his companion an ordinary priest; when drinking, according to the custom, he first drank to his companion and then to the emperor, thereby showing that he had a greater esteem for the priestly than for the imperial dignity, since the former represented the divine Majesty in a special manner. The Seraphic Father, St. Francis, used to say that if he met a priest still living on earth

[1] Sic respondes pontifici? [2] Si male locutos sum, testimonium perhibe de malo.

and a Saint from Heaven who was not ordained priest, he would first greet the priest and then the Saint. Nor must you be surprised at that, for the heavenly Princes themselves give the preference to the priests of Jesus Christ. Thus, St. Francis de Sales tells us of one of his Canons who was allowed by God to enjoy a special familiarity with his guardian angel; before he became a priest, he used to see his angel standing at his right hand, but after his ordination, the angel always remained at his left hand.

Even crowned heads bowed before them.

Nor can I wonder any longer that even crowned heads bowed down humbly before priests. The Emperor Constantine took the lowest place at the Council of Nice, below all the priests and on a low stool; he also decreed that priests should be honored above all lay-people, no matter what the rank, dignity, or position of the latter might be. Baleslaus, King of Poland, never sat down in presence of a priest. In the same way, the Emperor Theodosius refused to sit down when in the choir with the priests, although the Patriarch tried to compel him to do so, because he thought that by doing so he would be wanting in respect to the priesthood of Christ. The Emperor Basil spoke publicly to the people on the dignity of the priesthood, as Baronius tells us of the year 869, and among other things, he said as follows: An earthly lord, no matter how clever, learned, rich, or noble he is, is still only a sheep of the fold of Christ; on the other hand, a priest, no matter how poor, lowly, and simple he is, is a shepherd of the fold of Christ, and therefore must be honored above all those who are not priests.

There are, indeed, wicked priests.

You will think, my dear brethren, that I say all this because I, as a priest, would willingly be held in great honor. And you are quite right; it is true that I desire the honor that belongs to the priesthood; but not for the person of the priest, so much as for the Person of Jesus Christ whom he represents, and who wishes His ministers and ambassadors to be honored; just as the honor we show to the crucifix is not given to the wood or stone of which it is made, but to Him whom it represents. For I readily acknowledge that the priest is only a weak, miserable, and unworthy mortal like all others, and although he represents the Person of Christ, although he is invested with great power and dignity, such as are not given to the angels, yet he has not laid aside his human nature which is inclined to evil. I know that priests are often very sinful men and full of faults, and I must say with St. Paul, I am the chief of them.[1] I must acknowl-

[1] Quorum primus ego sum.—I. Tim. i. 15.

edge, with heartfelt regret, that now and then there are priests in the world who far surpass all others in wickedness; for they lead bad, immoral, and scandalous lives, unworthy of their dignity, and if such do not repent betimes, they will be amongst those of whom one of the holy Fathers says: "The crowns of priests will be the pavement of hell;"[1] for since they are during their lives raised to the highest dignity on earth, but disgrace it by their sinful ways, they will be sent after death to the deepest pit of hell, in punishment of their crimes.

Although the lives of bad priests must not be imitated, yet honor is due to them.

Not without cause did Christ say to all: "According to their works do ye not."[2] For it is a grievous error of some to imagine that they can do everything that a priest does or approves of. No; not everything that good and seemingly pious, religious and secular priests approve of is to be taken as an infallible rule of conduct; because even holy people have their faults and failings. Hence St. Paul, when exhorting the Corinthians to imitate him, says these remarkable words: "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ;"[3] by which he meant, if you see that I imitate Christ, then you can and you must do as I do. But, my dear brethren, no matter how wicked, faulty, or despicable a priest may be, he is still a priest of Jesus Christ; the Holiest of the holy, whom he represents, is still worthy of honor, so that he is to be honored just as if he were good and pious. I cannot show less respect to the ambassador of a king, because he is not very clever or skilful, than if he were a miracle of knowledge, since I must honor the person of his master in him; nor must I hold a crucifix of wood in less esteem than a gold or silver one, for it represents Jesus Christ, whom I am always bound to honor.

Shown by an example.

St. Francis of Assisi understood that very well; he once entered a Church the priest of which was leading a very bad life; a heretic came to him, and said: What shameless priests you have in your religion; how could any one believe what is said by a man who leads such a bad life? St. Francis, in order to confound the heretic, and to show the people that they must honor even wicked priests, went up to the priest of the Church, knelt before him, and said: That this hand is soiled with many crimes, as that man says, I know not; but I do know that, in any case, it can dispense the sacraments and many benefits of God to the

[1] Pavimentum inferni erunt coronæ sacerdotum.
[2] Secundum opera vero eorum nolite facere.—Matth. xxiii. 3.
[3] Imitatores mei estote, sicut et ego Christi.—I. Cor. xi. 1.

people; therefore I kiss it with the respect and reverence that I owe to Him in whose Name and by whose authority it dispenses the sacraments. Thus speaking, he respectfully kissed the priest's hand, and by his humility induced him to amend his life.

Many Christians sin in this particular.

Oh, how the example of this holy man puts to shame, not merely heretics, but many Catholics of our days! For how many there are who are grievously neglectful of their duty in this respect! Where is the honor due to Jesus Christ, that you should pay to His representatives? I speak to you, who do not hesitate to call priests by opprobrious names, and to ridicule everything they say; is that the way to honor Jesus Christ in His priests? I speak to you who have the habit of looking down upon priests, who are ashamed to be seen with them because the most of them are of lowly birth; you have just as much reason to be ashamed of crucifixes because they are mostly made of paper or wood! Is that the way to honor Jesus Christ in His ambassadors? I speak to you who often expect priests to perform services for you that are only fit for menials to render; is that the way to honor Jesus Christ in His representatives? I speak to you who publicly laugh at and ridicule priests; and to you, especially, who take a delight in speaking ill of them and in making known their faults. What a terrible crime it is to take away a priest's character, and thus to injure the reputation of a whole parish and give the people the greatest scandal; if we are ever bound to conceal our neighbor's faults, we must certainly cover those of a priest as well as we can. The great Emperor Constantine received letters in the Council of Nice, complaining of some priests, but he threw them unopened into the fire, saying: It is not right to make known the faults of priests. A favorite saying of his, too, was: If I saw a priest doing wrong, I would cover him with my imperial mantle, so as to hide his sin as far as possible. Jesus Christ Himself, when the adulteress was accused before Him by the priests in the temple, wrote their sins on the ground that they might be ashamed to stone the woman to death; and why, we might ask, did He write them on the ground? Lyranus tells us that He did so because they were the sins of priests, and our Lord wished to conceal them on that account, and therefore He wrote them so that the words would be at once rubbed out.

Conclusion and exhortation to

I conclude, my dear brethren, with the words of the Sacred Scripture that I have already quoted: "With all thy soul

honor priests.

fear the Lord, and reverence His priests."[1] Whenever you meet a priest, or speak of one, or hear one speak, think of Jesus Christ, whose ambassador he is, and no priest will ever seem too poor, too lowly, or too despicable to be treated with due respect. Think, also, of Him whom you dishonor if you are in any way disrespectful to a priest. A king takes to himself the insult offered to his ambassador, and will not allow it to go unpunished; and Jesus Christ also will punish all who offer insults to His priests, for He says: "He that despiseth you, despiseth Me."[2] "I will be the revenger."[3] If I had time I could give you instances to prove that a sudden death is often the punishment of those who even slightly mock priests; some who have raised their hands to strike them, have been suddenly lamed. Nicius Erythræus gives an example of the latter kind. A lady of noble birth who was staying in a village, sent to the priest who was about to say Mass for his congregation, to tell him that he must not commence until she should find it convenient to come; the priest agreed to do so, but since she spent too long a time in dressing, he could not wait any longer, and began the Mass, which he finished before the lady came. She got into a great rage when she heard of this, spoke very insultingly to the priest, accused him of being ill-mannered, and at last raised her hand to strike him. But God did not allow the insult offered His minister to go unpunished: for that lady afterwards gave birth to a daughter who was lame in one hand her whole life, and was for many years a visible proof of the evils caused by her mother's vanity and presumption. I repeat, my dear brethren: "With all thy soul fear the Lord, and reverence His priests." Remember what our Lord has promised to those who honor His ambassadors and representatives: He who honors Me, I will glorify him[4] in eternity. **Amen.**

[1] In tota anima tua time Dominum, et sacerdotes illius sanctifica.
[2] Qui vos spernit, me spernit.
[3] Ego ultor existam.—Deut. xviii. 19.
[4] Quicumque glorificaverit me, glorificabo eum.—I. Kings ii. 30.

FIFTY-FOURTH SERMON.

ON THE DUTIES OF MASTERS AND MISTRESSES TOWARDS THEIR SERVANTS.

Subject.

1st. Masters and mistresses are bound to look after the salvation of their servants. 2d. How they must do that. 3d. What advantage they may derive from doing so.—*Preached on the twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Credidit ipse, et domus ejus tota.—John iv. 53.
"Himself believed, and his whole house."

Introduction.

Happy, indeed, is the family of the head of which it may be truly said: "Himself believed, and his whole house."[1] The father and mother believe, the sons and daughters believe, the servants believe, the whole household believes in God and serves Him! Christian masters and mistresses, that this may be said of your households, depends mostly on how you lead on your children and your servants to serve God and to save their souls. What your duty is in this respect, with regard to your children, has already been sufficiently explained to you; would to God that all parents performed it exactly! But, due proportion being observed, it is your duty also to take the same care of your servants, and alas! there are many who think very little of that duty, on which the welfare of a Christian family depends, and which God Himself has commanded, as I shall show in to-day's sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

Masters and mistresses are bound to look diligently after the salvation of their servants. That I will briefly show in the first part. How they must do that. The second part. What ad-

[1] Credidit ipse, et domus ejus tota.

vantage they may derive from doing so. The third part. The subject is not so circumscribed as might appear at first sight; it chiefly concerns parents with regard to the training of their children; it concerns all housekeepers who are placed by their masters or mistresses in charge of servants; it concerns grown-up daughters who, generally speaking, have to help in housekeeping. Children, servants, and laborers may also learn from it, so that it is useful for all.

O Holy Ghost, we ask this advantage from Thee by Thy light and grace, through the intercession of Mary and that of our holy angels guardian, so that it may be true of every Christian family, "Himself believed, and his whole house."

Masters and mistresses are placed over servants for the advantage of the latter.

What St. Ambrose says of princes and kings who have to rule a country, must be also understood of masters and mistresses, and housekeepers who have charge of children or servants. Subjects, says St. Ambrose, are not placed in obedience for the advantage of their rulers, but rather the rulers are placed over subjects to look after them, to protect them from their enemies, and by wisdom and prudence, to secure to them peace, harmony, and prosperity; therefore, subjects owe their rulers far more gratitude, on account of the charge that God has laid upon them, than rulers owe their subjects for services rendered, and honor shown. What else is a family but a kind of government, or kingdom, in which commands are given and obeyed? And what is a kingdom but a large family, so to say, in which many individuals are bound to obey the same laws under one superior? What a king or ruler is for the state, that you are, masters and mistresses, for your households. Just as kings get their authority from God, not so much for their own good as for that of their subjects, so you are placed by God over your households, not merely for your own sakes, nor that you may be obeyed and waited upon, and seek your temporal profit and convenience by the labor of others; but also that you may have a parental care of their interests and especially of their eternal welfare. You have a right to exact obedience, respect, and service from them, and it is their duty to obey and respect you, because God requires them to do so. But they in turn have a right to be cared for and looked after by you, because that is the duty that God expects you to fulfil, and for which He will one day exact an account from you.

They must use their

That a master is bound to give sufficient board and lodging to

his servants, according to the general custom: that he must attend to their wants with Christian charity when they are sick, and do his best to restore them to health, although they cannot work nor earn anything for him while in that state; that he is bound by the law of justice to pay them their full wages at the proper time—these duties are recognized all over the world, and even Turks and heathens fulfil them. But the necessary care does not consist in that alone. I speak now to you, Christian masters and mistresses, and I tell you that there is a far higher obligation incumbent on you. You must be Apostles in your own households, you must act as preachers and priests to your servants, and take the greatest interest in their eternal salvation. Hear what St. Gregory says: In what, he asks, does the authority that a master has over his servants consist? It is a part, he answers, of the authority of God Himself; and hence, he concludes, a master must use it towards his servant in the same way that God makes use of His authority over all men. And what way is that? He uses it for our sanctification and salvation, as St. Paul says: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification."[1] The Almighty God, as every one must acknowledge, could command all men to serve Him, without His being obliged to give us any reward for doing so. In fact, we should look upon it as a great honor to spend even a thousand lives in His service, although we should never get the least reward from Him; but that is not His intention. We have in Him a most generous Lord, who never imposes the least command or law upon us, except for the good of our souls, and in order that we may be freed from eternal sorrow, and rejoice with everlasting joy in Heaven. See, continues St. Gregory, there is the foundation of your duty and obligation, Christian masters. Your servants are subject to you and must obey you; but they are not more subject to you than you are to God, and you must confess that. Now, God will not exercise any authority over you unless on the condition that He has imposed upon Himself, of furthering thereby your eternal salvation. To this end His plans are directed, for this He has pledged His own divine word. Is it not, then, only just and right for you to use your authority in the same way, that is, to take a deep interest in the eternal welfare of your servants?

power as God uses His, for the good of souls.

But why should I look for arguments to convince you of this duty, when it is explained so clearly by the Holy Ghost Himself

Such is the command of God.

[1] Hæc est enim voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra.—I. Thess. iv. 3.

in the Sacred Scriptures? St. Paul says to the Hebrews: "Obey your prelates, and be subject to them."[1] My dear brethren, if divine providence has placed you in such a position that you must give your liberty and your service to another man, be not afflicted on that account, be subject to your masters and true to them, obey them readily in all that is not contrary to the law of God, because you have much to expect from them: not only are they bound to give you food and wages, but something far more precious. And what is that? "For they watch as being to render an account of your souls."[2] If they are careless in doing so, God will demand your souls at their hands on the last day. It is then certain that every master is bound to look after the eternal welfare of his servants, in virtue of a tacit contract which he makes with them. Serve me, says the master, and do what I tell you, and I will bind myself not only to give you food and wages, but also to take all possible care of the welfare of your soul, since I must give an account of it to God in judgment. "For they watch as being to render an account of your souls." But how must they fulfil this duty? We shall see in the

Second Part.

They must give them good instruction, correction, and example.

There are three things principally in which a master must attend to the spiritual welfare of his servants: he must give them good example, instruction, and correction. Charitable correction, where it is necessary, in the same way as I have already explained, when speaking of the duty of parents to their children. Good example, so that he never allows his servants to see anything in his conduct that could give them scandal, or lead them into sin. Good instruction, by which he must often exhort them to good. He must chastise them with charity when they sin against God, or when they are idle and lazy, or when they are in dangerous occasions or company, so as to save them from sin and vice. If he is wanting in any of these three things, he does not perform his duty, and will be punished by God as an unfaithful steward.

Most fail grievously herein.

Oh, if I could visit all the Christian households of our days one after the other, how many would I find in which this important duty is not even thought of, much less fulfilled exactly! In which men and maid-servants have just reason for complaining, as the disciples of Christ did long ago, when they were on the

[1] Obedite præpositis vestris, et subjacete eis.—Heb. xiii. 17.
[2] Ipsi enim pervigilant, quasi rationem pro animabus vestris reddituri.—Ibid.

point of perishing in the storm : "Master, doth it not concern Thee that we perish ?"[1] Master, mistress, is it nothing to you that we are leading a bad life and will be lost ? Truly we might say of such masters and mistresses what God says by the Prophet Zacharias : "Oh, shepherd and idol :"[2] for they stand like graven images and let themselves be waited upon and served by others for whom they do nothing ; they have heads and understand not, they have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, mouths and speak not, hands and feet which they do not make use of. That is to say, their whole idea is to be waited upon by their servants, and to get as much work as possible out of them. But they never try to find out the moral faults and failings of their servants ; they have no eyes to watch over their lives and conduct, no mouths to exhort them to serve God, no hands to chastise them when necessary, no feet to go before them with good example. Nay, in place of watching over their salvation, they rather help them to eternal ruin ; in place of showing them the way to Heaven, they lead them to hell. In place of being the shepherds of their souls, they are thieves and murderers who kill their souls and destroy them !

They lead their servants into wickedness.

Is it not, alas, only too true ? What kind of teaching is sometimes given to servants ? What use is made of the servant, who is already indifferent enough about pleasing God, as long as he can satisfy his temporal master ? He is simply the tool, the instrument with which his master commits sin ; he must carry sinful letters and help to keep up an improper correspondence for his master ; he must learn how to lie and cheat, to get drunk, to be vindictive and unjust. What use is made of that maid-servant, who is already little inclined to learn her catechism ? She must help in everything that an idle, worldly life and wicked desires suggest to her mistress ; or she is made an accomplice in the sin of her master. How many girls there are who go into service innocent, pure, and leave it disgraced and dishonored ! O useless shepherds ! O false images !

Who give them bad example.

And what kind of example do they get ? Do they see their masters, if not in the morning, at least in the evening, kneel down with them to say their prayers ? Do they often hear their masters speak of God and holy things ? Do they see in them an example of Christian humility and meekness, of peace and unity, of resignation to the will of God, of the frequent re-

[1] Magister, non ad te pertinet, quia perimus ?—Mark iv. 38.
[2] O pastor et idolum.—Zach. xi. 17.

ception of the sacraments? That is the way in which a Christian household should be governed. For all the servants would follow the good example, and the words of the Gospel might be affirmed truly of the master of the house: "Himself believed, and his whole house."[1] But, oh, Christians, we know the force of bad example, especially when given by one whom we must honor and respect. Tell me, now, how will it be with simple, uneducated, ignorant people, as most of those are who must earn their bread by waiting on others, when they see that their masters and mistresses, with whom they are in daily contact, lead bad and wicked lives; that they have little taste for piety, but much for vice; that they are constantly quarrelling with each other and cursing and swearing at their children; that they are prone to back-biting and calumny? What, think you, must be the effect of example like that, on souls that are already inclined to evil? Is it not natural to expect that in a short time they will be like their masters and mistresses, and that they will learn from them to speak ill of others, to curse and swear, and to be slothful and lazy in the service of God? 'Certainly, if they were innocent and virtuous when entering into service, they would leave it full of vice and wickedness. Oh, shepherds and disgraceful idols!

Their sins against God are not chastised.

And how are they corrected of their faults? Oh, if they displease their masters and mistresses, no punishment is too severe for them! The advice of the Wise Ecclesiasticus would then come in very well indeed: "Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them of thy household, and oppressing them that are under thee."[2] But if the offence be against God alone, the masters and mistresses are indifferent. If the man-servant, through mere carelessness, is not in his place at the proper time; if the maid-servant forgets a message, or breaks anything by accident, then the master or mistress is angry enough; there is no end of cursing, swearing and abuse; the poor servant is turned away or deprived of a part of the wages agreed upon, so that such a fault may never be committed again. But if the man-servant is slothful in the divine service, and given to cursing and swearing; if the maid-servant is given to frequenting dangerous company, very little is thought of that, as long as they do their work well otherwise. Nay, no account at all is taken of such faults: masters do not even wish to examine into them for fear of disagree-

[1] Credidit ipse, et domus ejus tota.

[2] Noli esse sicut leo in domo tua, evertens domesticos tuos, et opprimens subjectos tibi.—Ecc. iv. 35.

able consequences, until at last there is a public scandal, and the only excuse is, I knew nothing about it; if I had heard of it sooner, I should have prevented it, etc. And how does it happen, asks St. Bernard, that you knew nothing of it? Was it not your duty to have known of it? Should you not have kept a watchful eye on your servants? It is indeed a strange thing that sins are committed in your own house, almost under your eyes, and you are the last to hear of them![1] These are the words of the Saint. You know very well how your servants attend upon you, and whether they are lazy or diligent. You cannot be too sharp in seeing whether they ever take anything out of the house by stealth; that you are sure to find out, for you spy about with lynx-eyed vigilance for faults of that kind; nay, if you have any grounds for suspecting them of dishonesty towards you, you lay traps for them, in order to prove their guilt; thus you tempt the simple souls, and place them in the occasion of sin, for according to the proverb, "Opportunity makes the thief." See how careful you are to correct the faults that your servants commit against yourself; but you know nothing and care to know nothing, of the sins that are committed against God by those subject to you, over whose souls God has placed you as shepherd and guardian. Is that Christian conduct? Oh, shepherd, or rather betrayer, of souls![2]

Heathens and heretics put Catholics to shame herein.

How ashamed Christian masters must be when they read of the zeal that the heathen emperor Dioclesian had for the honor of his dumb idols! He never allowed a single member of his court, from the highest to the lowest, to be absent when he offered incense to the gods; all were obliged to join with him in showing them that honor; a single fault in this respect was enough to bring down severe punishment on the offender's head. What a shame that heretics should be more careful in this respect than Catholics, and should insist on their servants going regularly to church morning and evening, and joining in the usual devotions and psalm-singing, as I myself have often seen with astonishment! I cannot help thinking to myself, when I consider that, that amongst the black sheep and those who have apostatized from the Church, there is more care and watchfulness with regard to servants, than amongst true Christians. And thus every day verifies the saying of St. Paul to Timothy: "But if any man have

[1] Ut vitia domus tuæ ultimus nescias.

[2] O pastor et idolum!

not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."[1]

For the latter rule as if the salvation of their servants was of no concern to them.

It seems to me that I hear many say in their own minds what the high-priests said to Judas, when he repented of having betrayed to them the innocent Jesus: "What is that to us? Look thou to it."[2] "What is that to us?" thinks the master or mistress sometimes. What have I to do with the consciences of my servants? What difference does it make to me whether they lead a good or a bad life? If they wish to go to Heaven, it is their own affair; they are old enough to understand what they are about; if they are lost forever, it is their own fault. I have not to look after their souls; I have made no agreement to instruct them and lead them on to virtue. I give them food and wages if they serve me properly; they cannot expect anything more from me. But what sort of talk is that? Christians, is the salvation of your servants, then, nothing to you? Is it a matter of indifference to you whether they are lost or saved? What becomes of the law of Christian charity which binds every one to help his neighbor's salvation as much as possible?[3] Hear what St. Paul writes to the Romans, and learn from him what an important matter it is for you: "A servant," he says, "to his own lord standeth or falleth."[4] Have you made no contract with him to look after his soul? It is bad for you, indeed, to forget all about it! Know, then, that the Almighty God, the Sovereign Master, has made that contract with your servants in your name, and woe to you if you do not fulfil it faithfully! He will one day require their souls at your hands, and not only your own sins, but the sins of your servants that you could have prevented, will be the cause of your damnation. And to prove this more clearly to you, I will take up that extraordinary question: What is the salvation of our servants to us?[5] What good or harm is it to us, whether they live well or ill? Certainly it is a matter of great importance to you; it is a great advantage for you if they live piously, and if you look after their souls. Therefore, your own advantage requires you to take care of their spiritual welfare, as we shall see briefly in the

[1] Si quis autem suorum, et maxime domesticorum curam non habet, fidem negavit, et est infideli deterior.—I. Tim. v. 8.

[2] Quid ad nos? Tu videris.—Matth. xxvii. 4.

[3] Mandavit illis unicuique de proximo suo.—Eccl. xvii.12.

[4] Domino suo stat, aut cadit.—Rom. xiv. 4. [5] Quid ad nos?

Third Part.

The temporal welfare of a household depends on what is done for the salvation of the servants.

I will not speak now of the great merit to your own souls, oh, fathers and mothers of families, which you lay up in Heaven, by being co-operators and helpers of Jesus Christ, and laboring with Him to further the honor and glory of God in the souls of your dependants; for there is nothing more God-like than to work for the salvation of souls that have been redeemed at such a great price.[1] And what a splendid opportunity you have of doing so! I will consider merely the temporal advantages you may derive from that. The quiet, peace, unity, security, industry, profit, and prosperity of your whole household depend on the care you take of the souls of your dependants. I will bring forward your own complaints to prove this. How often do you not complain that you have so much trouble with your servants? I do not mean to say that your complaints have no foundation. I grant, even, that you have cause enough to make them. One servant is a quarrelsome, ill-humored fellow, who can leave no one in peace. Another is slothful and lazy at work, but quick enough in coming to his meals. You must be always looking after them; if you turn your back, they will do nothing. And this one cannot be depended upon, he is never around when he is wanted. The maid-servant is obstinate; she will do nothing at the proper time, but takes up now one thing, now another, just as it suits her humor. She must be told to do a thing ten times before she obeys. If you venture to speak a serious word to her, she has twenty answers ready. You have reason to suspect another of being unfaithful to you, as she is in the habit of going with people of doubtful reputation. You cannot leave anything in her hands. Whatever occurs in the house she tells the whole neighborhood. It must be one of the servants, you say, who began that talk and spread it about among people whom it does not concern. My children, too, sometimes say things they cannot understand, as they are so young; I do not know where they learned them; there must be some one in the house who indulges in improper conversation. Such are the daily crosses that one has to bear from one's own servants. In a word, my servants are the cause of all my uneasiness, chagrin, impatience, cursing, and sinfulness. How fortunate people are who have good and faithful servants! You may continue with your complaints, for you know more about them than I do. And indeed, I must acknowl-

[1] Nihil divinius, quam cooperari ad salutem animarum.

edge that it is a most intolerable, vexatious and wretched thing for servants to be so untrue to their duty. But do you know whence that comes? They do not lead pious and Christian lives: they do not fear and love God as they ought; they have no inclination for piety, and are not encouraged nor exhorted to it by any one. If they go once or twice a year to confession and communion, and hear a short Mass on Sundays and holy-days, that is all that their masters ask them to do for their souls, or all that they, through want of encouragement and instruction, care to do for God and for Heaven. In other things it seems almost as if they were excommunicated. They never hear a sermon, never come to catechism, and so never have a chance of learning how to fear the Lord, and to acknowledge their own faults. Is it, then, any wonder, that since they are so lazy and unfaithful in the service of God, they are also wanting in fidelity to their earthly masters?

For when servants are pious they commit no faults, and their masters have no cause for complaint.

Do you wish your servants to amend? What is the best way to effect that? To put away your present servants, as some do, and hire new ones who will be just as bad as the former, so that they, too, must be sent away? No, I can give you far better advice than that. You have only to see that those who are now in your service lead pious and Christian lives. Then your complaints will cease at once, for if they are good Christians, they will live in peace with each other, and there will be an end to quarrelling and disputes; they will be ready to help each other, and will vie with each other in readiness to fulfil your wishes. If they are good Christians, they will always show you proper respect and obedience, and they will consider your commands as if they came from God Himself, whom they will see and honor in your persons. If they are good Christians, you need never be afraid that they will scandalize your children, or teach them wickedness, nor will you have to fear bad company, unfaithfulness, or thieving. If they are good Christians, they will not murmur against, nor complain of you, and they will toil and labor with the greatest zeal for your advantage. And why so? Because the Christian law requires all this from them, and they know that it pleases God if they fulfil that law. Therefore, some miserly masters trouble themselves uselessly with certain thoughts: If I send my servants to Mass every morning, they will lose too much time, and I shall lose a whole hour's work. What? And if they lost two hours in that way, would you be any worse for it? For if they make the proper intention of serv-

ing God, in the morning, they will do their work during the day all the more earnestly and diligently, because they will remember the intention they made. I do this for the honor of God, therefore I must do it properly. In a word, servants who are good in the sight of God, are also true and diligent in the service of their temporal masters and mistresses. In that way one could in a short time say of your household, what our Lord said of that of Zacheus: "This day is salvation come to this house."[1] Peace and harmony reign therein, and there is no one to disturb them. Master and man-servant, mistress and maid-servant are of one mind; the servants are only glad to obey; the master and mistress have hardly any occasion to command, because each servant knows his or her duty, and is ready to do it with a good intention for God's sake. The servants are like children in the house, they honor and love their master and mistress as they would their own parents. And in such a household as that, where all lead pious and Christian lives, what else can there be but happiness, prosperity, and a copious blessing from God? All good things come into a house together with piety.[2] Oh, certainly, such a household is a dwelling place of angels and Saints on earth! "Himself believed, and his whole house."[3]

Conclusion, and exhortation to heads of families to urge their dependants to piety.

My dear Christians, and you, especially, fathers and mothers of families, do you wish to have such a happy household to dwell in? Then see, first of all, that you yourselves are good and pious, and after that, see, with all possible diligence, that your children and servants also lead good and holy lives. Often call to mind that God has placed you over them as the pastors of their souls, and that you must one day render a strict account as to the manner in which you have performed that duty. If this thought does not move you, then remember that your welfare and that of your whole family depend on whether you all lead holy lives or not. Take as your example that wise woman, of whom the Wise Man says: "She hath looked well to the paths of her house;"[4] that is, she knew everything that occurred in the house, and what her dependants were doing; nay, so great was her watchfulness that it sometimes interfered with her night's rest: "She hath risen in the night and given a prey to her household, and victuals to her maidens."[5] And not only did she provide

[1] Hodie salus domui huic facta est.—Luke xix. 9.
[2] Venerunt mihi omnia bona pariter cum illa.—Sap. vii. 11.
[3] Credidit ipse, et domus ejus tota.
[4] Consideravit semitas domus suæ.—Prov. xxxi. 27.
[5] De nocte surrexit, deditque prædam domesticis suis, et cibaria ancillis suis.—Ibid. 15.

sufficiently for their bodily nourishment, but also she looked after their souls: "She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue."[1] That is to say, she opened her mouth to teach her dependants true wisdom, to give them instruction regarding their eternal salvation and the practice of virtue, and thereby she gained great fame, and was looked upon as the most fortunate woman in the world: "Her children," and her servants, "rose up and called her blessed."[2] Imitate her example, Christian fathers and mothers, and happiness will reward your zeal for souls, if not here, at least hereafter, where master and servant, mistress and maid, will differ only according to their different merits, where we shall all be masters, since we shall have everything we desire and wish for; and where we shall all be servants of our great God, in whom we shall also have a most loving Friend, and whom we shall love in eternity in His household, that is, in the kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Second Sunday of Advent:

Text.

Mittens duos de discipulis suis, ait illi: Tu es, qui venturus es?—Matth. xi. 2, 3.

"Sending two of his disciples, he said to Him: Art thou He that art to come?"

Did not John know that Jesus was the Messias? Had he not seen with his own eyes, when baptizing Him, the Holy Ghost descend on Him in the form of a dove, and heard the voice of the heavenly Father saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"?[3] Has he not often pointed Him out to the people as the Lamb of God?[4] Why then does he ask: "Art thou He that art to come, or look we for another?"[5] Had he, perhaps, begun to doubt whether Christ was the long-promised Saviour of the world? There were really some who entertained that erroneous opinion. But Cornelius à Lapide, commenting on to-day's Gospel, refutes that error, and holds with Saint Hilary, Cyril, Theophylactus, Enthymius, Rupert, John Chrysostom, and others, who do not ascribe that question to ignorance,

[1] Os suum aperuit sapientiæ, et lex clementiæ in lingua ejus.—Prov. xxxi. 26.
[2] Surrexerunt filii ejus, et beatissimam prædicaverunt.—Ibid. 28.
[3] Hic est filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi complacui.—Matth. iii. 17.
[4] Ecce agnus Dei! [5] Tu es qui venturus es? An alium exspectamus?

much less to doubt, but to the great care that John took to instruct his disciples in the way of salvation. Cornelius à Lapide says: "John sends his disciples to ask Jesus if He were the Messias; not because he doubted it, but because, as he was near death, he wished to put an end to the doubts of his disciples, and to give them over to Christ."[1] Christian parents, fathers and mothers of families, there you have a fine example to show how careful you must be in looking after the salvation of your children and of your hired servants, and in leading them to Christ and to Heaven. That you are bound to do this for your children, no one, I think, will doubt; but that you are also bound to do it, due proportion being observed, for your servants, is, also, etc.—*continues as before.*

FIFTY-FIFTH SERMON.

ON THE DUTIES OF SERVANTS TOWARDS THEIR MASTERS AND MISTRESSES.

Subject.

Servants must serve their masters and mistresses. 1st. With fidelity. 2d. With ready and patient obedience.—*Preached on the fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Nemo potest duobus dominis servire.—Matth. vi. 24.
"No man can serve two masters."

Introduction.

I readily admit that no one can serve two masters at the same time; for when one commands a thing, and the other commands the contrary, and both with equal right to be obeyed, it is not possible for the same servant to fulfil the will of both at once. But it is easy enough to serve one master. And would to God that all servants did so, as they ought! If I were to inquire about

[1] Joannes mittit discipulos, ac rogat Jesum, an ipse sit Messias: non quod de eo dubitaret, sed quod morti vicinus discipulos de eo dubitantes voluerit instrui et ad Christum traduci.

the matter, many masters and mistresses would have to complain to me that they have a great deal of trouble and annoyance with their servants. The cause of that is sometimes to be found in the faults of the masters and mistresses themselves, who do not know how to manage their households properly; and sometimes in the servants, who cannot or will not do their duty. I have already spoken, my dear brethren, of the duty of the former, and now I must not forget the latter, especially since they are more in need of instruction, and have not such opportunities of coming to sermons and other devotions, as their masters and mistresses. Therefore I will now explain to them, in a way they will understand, the duty they owe their employers, and how they are to perform it so as to please God and satisfy their own consciences.

Plan of Discourse.

They must serve their masters and mistresses with fidelity. The first part. They must serve them with ready and patient obedience. The second part. Nearly all the rest of you who are present will find that you can learn something useful from this sermon.

Great Lady and Queen of the world, Mary, thou hast the name of a handmaid of the Lord;[1] heavenly spirits, holy guardian angels, you are called, "Ministers of the Lord, who do His will,"[2] nay, you even attend on us, poor mortals—obtain now, for all whom this subject concerns, light and grace to know their duty, and to fulfil it constantly.

In what the fidelity of a servant consists.

It is an evident and undoubted truth that no one can call in question that servants must serve their masters and mistresses. The very name of servant proves that; it is the will and law of God; it is required by the contract they made when they entered into service. But there is a great difference between serving and serving. There are some to whom Christ says with love and favor: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."[3] What a beautiful commendation that is! There are others whom the same Lord will drive away with anger and displeasure, saying to them: "Wicked and slothful servant."[4] What a terrible condemnation! He who wishes to belong to the first class, must

[1] Ancilla Domini. [2] Ministri ejus, qui factis voluntatem ejus.
[3] Euge, serve bone et fidelis.—Matth. xxv. 23.
[4] Serve male et piger.—Ibid. 26.

before all serve his master with honesty and fidelity ; he must be exact in performing the work and the duty intrusted to him, just as if he were doing it for his own profit and advantage ; he must be faithful in guarding, and if possible, in increasing his master's goods ; he must be faithful in protecting his master's household, as well as he can, from all hurt and harm. Two commands are given to all men by God : "Decline from evil, and do good."[1] I can sin grievously against either, and so lose my soul. It is not sufficient for the service of God for me to abstain from evil. I must also do the good that is required of me. The same thing is to be observed, in due proportion, by all servants towards their masters and mistresses. To rob your masters, and carry off, or wilfully destroy their property, is, as all admit, very wrong and unjust, and you would be bound to bring back or make restitution for the stolen or injured property, if you could do so, before getting pardon for your sin. But supposing one does none of those things, is he, therefore, a good and faithful servant? By no means ; that is not near enough ; otherwise, the servant in the Gospel would have been unjustly treated. He was intrusted by his master with a talent, which he neither spent in drink nor made away with otherwise, but hid carefully in the ground, and gave back again to his master, when the latter returned ; and yet because he did not use it to his master's profit, he was treated as a wicked and unfaithful servant, and was cast into exterior darkness. But, he could have said, I have done no wrong to my master ; I have not injured his property, and I have given him back what belonged to him. No matter ; you are a bad servant,[2] because you should at least have laid out the talent at interest, that your master might have received it back with profit.

Idle and careless servants sin against this.

In the same way those servants sin against this duty, who are lazy and careless in doing their work, and who are indifferent as to how they perform it ; or who, when they see any act of unfaithfulness in their fellow-servants, do not make it known to their masters ; or otherwise do not protect the household from injury when it is in their power to do so. As a general rule, that negligence and laziness may be traced to the fact that they consider their masters as strangers. What is it to me ? they say ; I gain nothing by that profit, and suffer nothing by that loss. That is true, if you consider your master alone ; his goods do not belong to you ; but your master is not a stranger to you in the sight of God, who has called you to your state of life that you may

[1] Declina a malo, et fac bonum.—Ps. xxxvi. 27. [2] Serve male !

look after your master's interests as carefully and diligently as you can, according to the duty imposed upon you, and a strict account will one day be required of you, when God will say to you: "Give an account of thy stewardship."[1]

Still more dishonest servants.

Still greater is the sin committed by those servants who secretly make away with their master's property, or give it to their friends and relations under the pretext that their masters are rich enough and will not miss what they give away, or that what is of little use to them will be of great service to those to whom they give it; and by those who now and then keep something small for themselves, or use it for their own purposes. Ah, my dear people, that will not do; such acts are unjust, and are worse than the thefts committed by robbers. How so? Because one can protect himself against a robber with bars and bolts, but not against those whom he does not even suspect, because they are his domestics and he trusts in them. You say, my master has enough already; what I take from him will do him no harm. Has he enough? Has he therefore asked that something be taken away from him? Is it therefore allowed for you to make away with his property without his consent? If that were the case, all poor people could, with clear consciences, rob the rich, and excuse themselves by saying: Oh, they are rich enough, they will not miss it. No, Christians, that will not do. But, you say, suppose it is something trifling, that I now and then keep for myself, or steal; I will make up for it by being more diligent in my work. If your master has made that agreement with you, that provided you are diligent in your work, you can now and then take some trifle for yourself, then it is all right, you can do so. Ask him, however, if he wishes to make such an agreement, and if he says no, then your excuse is of no avail; your master does not require extraordinary diligence from you on such terms. Do your daily work well; look after your own concerns, and let your master manage his. Again, if it is a trifle that you take away, it is certainly only a trifling act of unfaithfulness, a small theft, a venial sin. But when it occurs often, it becomes greater, and when small thefts are added together they make up matter enough for a grievous sin; and when you cause your master serious injury, you commit a mortal sin of theft, unless inculpable ignorance excuses you, and you incur the obligation of restitution when you are able. More than that: if you intend to take away little things now and then,

[1] Redde rationem villicationis tuæ.—Luke xvi. 2.

and to keep them until you have something considerable, you commit a mortal sin, not merely when you commit the last of the series of thefts, but also in every single theft; such is the general teaching of theologians. The reason thereof is that you have each time the will and intention to commit a grievous theft, and of course each time you renew your intention of committing a grievous sin. The same is to be said, too, of all shopkeepers who use short measures or light weights; every slight theft that is committed by such means, although it does not do much harm to the person on whom it is committed, yet in the course of time amounts to a considerable sum. In all these cases, unless ignorance excuses, a grievous sin is committed, and restitution must be made to the public, to atone for the injustice committed, and that, too, in the place where the unjust profit was made. If those who have wronged their neighbor in that way, wish to make restitution, they must ask a competent confessor for advice.

Also they who privately pay themselves.

Moreover, sin is committed also by those servants who privately supplement their wages, either because they think they are paid too little for the work they do, or because other servants are better paid for doing less work; or because they have helped their employers in some way that did not enter into their engagement; or because a part of their yearly wages has been kept back in punishment of a fault. For these and similar reasons, they try to pay themselves secretly, and as they think, without doing any wrong. Again, my dear people, I must tell you that that will not do. No one is a judge in his own cause. If every one could pronounce according to his own opinion, with regard to himself, what disturbance that would cause in the world! Who could then trust his neighbor? For, in the first place, you think your wages too small in comparison with the work you do, or that others are better paid; why then did you agree with your master for such wages? You could have demanded different wages if you liked; and if you did not think that the work would turn out to be as hard as it really is, you must represent the matter to your employer and ask for more wages. In the second place, if you have done something for him, that you were not bound to do, certainly decency requires him to repay you in some way for that service, but if he refuses to do so, he is only acting as he has a right to act, because you rendered the service of your own accord, at his desire. In the third place, if something is taken away from your wages, I know that it is a sin crying to Heaven,

to do so without just cause, and if you are innocent you can complain to your master; if you are guilty, you must bear the consequences of your own act. Occult compensation (and I say this for all) is never allowed unless when all the following circumstances certainly occur together: First, there must be no doubt about the debt owed to me by another, and this circumstance is wanting in the excuses already brought forward; secondly, I must be certain that he who is in my debt will never pay me, although I have often asked him to do so, or at least I must have reason to believe that my asking will have no effect; thirdly, if after having employed all the lawful means in my power, I find that I cannot get what is due to me in any other way, I am allowed to pay myself privately, yet with the obligation of warning those who belong to me that they cannot hereafter ask my debtor to pay.

Even they who give alms without the knowledge and consent of their employers.

Finally, those servants sin against the fidelity due to their employers (here, oh, my God, the law of justice and the obligation to tell the truth compel me to speak against my inclination), who without their knowledge and consent give alms out of their property to the poor. But, you say, that is a work of Christian charity and mercy that is shown to Jesus Christ Himself, whom the poor person represents. Can I not even venture to give a piece of bread to my poor and needy Saviour? Certainly it is a work of mercy, and I am ready to do all in my power to urge men to practise it, but it is not a good work unless you give the alms from what belongs to yourself, or from what you are allowed to give away that belongs to others. It is not allowed to steal leather and give away the shoe made with it, as is falsely related of a certain Saint. I say, without the knowledge and consent of your employers; for if your master and mistress are in the habit of giving alms on certain days, you can, in their absence, reasonably presume that you have their permission to give also; or if they know that you give away the remnants of the food, and they say nothing to you about it, they give a tacit consent to what you do. In other cases, when the master and mistress are displeased with you for speaking to them on behalf of the poor, although they sometimes sin through want of charity, still you are not allowed to give alms even to Christ, of what belongs to others. You will think, now, that I am rather hard upon your state of life. Oh, no, the love I have for your souls compels me to speak the plain truth.

Instruction for

If there are any who have sinned against justice in any of these

points, they must explain the matter clearly to their confessor: they must tell him what they took, how much, how often, and with what intention they did it; he will then know how to advise them and to tell them how they are to set matters right. With regard to those who have given alms with their master's property, in good faith, they need not be anxious, nor are they bound to declare it in confession as a sin; for what was not a sin then through inculpable ignorance, cannot become a sin afterwards, when they know better; nay, they should rather rejoice that, by that inculpable ignorance, they were enabled to do a good work of Christian charity, and to gain merit in Heaven. St. Cæsarius, when he was a boy, if he saw a poor man who was ill clad, used to pull off his clothes and give them to him, and when on his return home his parents asked him what he had done with them, he would say that they were taken from him by force. There is no doubt that he did a good work, although he thus gave alms without his parents' consent, because he knew no better, and acted through a charitable desire to clothe the naked. Servants who act thus in good faith, are not bound to make restitution, because they gave the alms with a clear conscience and did not become richer thereby; and, besides, what they gave is already consumed by the poor. What I have said up to this, my dear brethren, is also true, due proportion being observed, of the children of the household, and of all who in any way administer the property of others. "Well done, good and faithful servant."[1] If you wish to deserve that praise, be honest and faithful to your employers. Serve them also with ready and patient obedience; and that is the duty, too, of all subjects towards their spiritual and temporal superiors, as we shall see in the

Those who have hitherto sinned in this way.

Second Part.

Two things are to be observed here, namely, a ready obedience, and a patient obedience. A ready obedience in all things that masters and mistresses justly command, just as if the command came from God Himself. Hear what St. Paul says on this point, when he explains the duties of different states of life, as well as those of servants: "Servants," he says in his Epistle to the Ephesians, "be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ," and not otherwise; not because they are looking at you,

Servants must obey their employers with ready obedience, because they thus serve Christ.

[1] Euge, serve bone et fidelis.

not because you wish to please men, "but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with a good will serving, as to the Lord, and not to men,"[1] certain that you will receive your reward from the same Lord. In these words the Apostle explains the dignity of your state and duty. Servitude is generally looked upon by men as undesirable, contemptible, and despicable, and they who serve others think that their state is the lowest and most unfortunate of all. But St. Paul says, for your consolation, that such is not the case; you are servants of Christ, attendants on the Most High God; and whenever you obey your masters on earth, with ready submission and a good intention, God accepts your obedience as if it were offered to Him, and in addition to the yearly wages you receive on earth, He will give you the eternal joys of Heaven. Certainly that is great encouragement to obey readily, willingly, and joyfully! What greater dignity can a poor man have, than to be able to call himself, with the Apostle, "a servant of Jesus Christ,"[2] an attendant on the Almighty God, who is served and honored in the persons of master and mistress?

Because they thus do the will of God.

What a happiness for servants to be thus always certain of doing the will of God, whenever they obey the lawful commands of their employers during the day! It is in doing that holy will that all our piety, devotion, and holiness consist, as I shall prove more in detail further on. What a consolation for servants on the day of judgment, when many other people will have to give a strict account of the good works they omitted, such as almsdeeds, charity, reading spiritual books, often hearing sermons, frequent prayer, and other devotions, while the former will simply have to say to their Judge: I did what my master and mistress told me the whole day long, and Thou hast desired me to obey them, since Thou hast placed me in that state, just as I should obey Thee. I have only been able to hear Mass daily: sometimes a whole day passed without my being able to go once to Church, but I could not help it, for such was the will of my employers. I have hardly ever said a whole rosary in the day, because I was kept busy with other things. I have often lost the sermon on Sundays and holy-days, because I was told to remain in the house. I have often been obliged to send Thee, my Saviour, away, when Thou camest in the persons of the poor;

[1] Servi, obedite dominis carnalibus cum timore et tremore, in simplicitate cordis vestri, sicut Christo. Non ad oculum servientes, quasi hominibus placentes, sed ut servi Christi, facientes voluntatem Dei ex animo, sicut Domino et non hominibus.—Ephes. vi. 5-7

[2] Servus Jesu Christi.—Rom. i. 1.

my heart was full of pity for Thee, but I could not help it, because I had not permission to give alms. On Sundays and holy-days I have often, with the approval of my confessor, spent an hour in sewing or other manual labor, but I could not help it, because my employers gave me no other time during the week to mend my own clothes. In Lent I have often used the general dispensation to eat meat, because my employers gave me nothing else. But Thou, oh, my God, hast told me by Thy servant, that it was Thy holy will for me to obey my employers in all lawful things. Behold, I have done as Thou hast commanded,[1] I have done it with a good intention for Thy sake, and I have renewed that intention often during my daily work, so that I have fulfilled Thy holy will, and Thou canst require nothing more from me. And now I expect the reward Thou hast promised me.[2] "Servants, obey your masters!"[3] Oh, how fortunate you are! Your masters can sin by their commands or prohibitions, but you cannot go astray by obeying them, as long as what is commanded is not against the law of God. Such is the will of God, and you always do a holy work, that is pleasing to Him, and meritorious of eternal glory, as long as you do not forget the good intention, nor lose the state of grace by a mortal sin. Therefore, obey your employers gladly and joyfully, with readiness, and in the simplicity of your hearts, "as to Christ."[4]

They who are not obedient enough, sin against this.

Now, there are two sorts of servants who sin against this obedience. Some are not obedient enough, others are too obedient. The first class consists of those who must be told a thing three or four times before they do it, and who thus generally cause their employers much annoyance and anger, and give occasion for impatience, and cursing or abuse; or who do what they are told, when it is against their will, with a great deal of grumbling and discontent, slowly and unwillingly; or, what is very disrespectful indeed, who answer their employers back and give them abuse for abuse, and curse for curse. If you would only remember, for a moment, that it is Jesus Christ whom you thus treat disrespectfully in the persons of your employers! Listen to what St. Paul writes to Timothy, 6th chapter: "Whosoever are servants under the yoke, let them count their masters worthy of all honor; lest the name of the Lord and His doctrine be blasphemed."[5] They must humbly obey, even as St. Peter

[1] Feci, quod jussisti. [2] Redde, quod promisisti.
[3] Servi, obedite dominis! [4] Sicut Christo.
[5] Quicunque sunt sub jugo servi, dominos suos omni honore dignos arbitrentur, ne nomen Domini et doctrina blasphemetur.—I. Tim. vi. 1.

says, the froward, wicked, and ungodly,[1] even those who command harshly and angrily. St. Paul continues: "But they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but serve them the rather, because they are faithful."[2] If one obeys only commands that are given in kind and gentle words, or when the command is to his liking; if the master and mistress, in order to keep peace in the house, must give in to the humor of a servant, and not venture to ask him to do what he does not like to do, such an obedience as that is not worth much; in that way one does his own will, and not that of his master, and of course will have little merit in the sight of God.

Shown by a simile.

I will give you a simile to explain this, in the shape of a story taken from the books of the Spanish Inquisition. A certain gentleman was very intimate with a sorcerer; on one occasion he saw that the latter, when he wished anything to be done, put his hat on a broom, drew a small circle around it, and muttered a few words, whereupon the broom became a servant and offered at once to do its master's will, saying: What do you wish me to do, master? What are your commands? The broom fulfilled the sorcerer's wishes most exactly: it ran hither and thither, and did everything, and when its master required its services no longer, it retired into its corner, and became a broom again. The gentleman was astonished at all this, and wished to have a similar servant; he therefore paid great attention to the words used by the sorcerer, and when he returned home, he ordered a large new broom to be brought He admired it very much, and took it into his hands, turning it around, and saying to it jestingly: What a fine servant you will make; then, speaking the magic words, he changed it into a servant, who immediately asked him: What do you command? Go, said the gentleman, and bring me some water, and put it in this basin. The new servant at once went out, brought in the water and filled the basin to the brim. Now, said the gentleman, I have water enough; go to the forest and bring some wood; but the servant went this time to the sea and brought in more water. I told you, said the gentleman, that I had water enough; I want wood to make fire in the stove; but the servant brought water a third time, and no matter what he was told, he continued to bring nothing but water, until the room was flooded. At last the sor-

[1] Etiam dyscolis.

[2] Qui autem fideles habent dominos, non contemnant, quia fratres sunt; sed magis serviant, quia fideles sunt.—I. Tim. vi. 1.

cerer was called in, and by a few words that the gentleman had not remarked before, he put an end to the matter. There can be no doubt that this servant was an evil spirit. But there are many servants who seem to wait on their employers in just the same manner: instead of bringing wood, they bring water. The man-servant is away on some message that he forgot, instead of attending on his master; the maid-servant is busy among the pots and pans in the kitchen, instead of being at work in the parlor, as she should be; everything is topsy-turvy, according to the humor they are in. In a word, there are servants who obey, but only in things that are easy, agreeable, and suited to their taste; in other matters they follow their own inclinations. Such servants as that are not worth much. No, they should obey in all things, exactly as their masters and mistresses wish, even if they have to act against their own will, their own comfort or convenience; and even if their obedience entails upon them difficulty, mortification, and humiliation; this is the proper kind of obedience, in which Christian virtue consists, and which increases one's merits and rewards in Heaven.

They who are too obedient.

The other class is still worse, and consists of those who are too obedient, and who, through human respect, or to please their employers, do everything that they are told, even if it be unlawful and against the laws of God or of the Church. Thus, for instance, servants sometimes consent to engage in servile work on Sundays and holy-days. They tell lies, when ordered to do so, so as to cheat others in business. They carry letters to and fro, and thus help to keep up a criminal intercourse, or do other things for the same unlawful purpose. They help their masters to take revenge on an enemy, or try to ruin that enemy's character by calumny and detraction. They allow improper liberties to be taken with themselves, as is sometimes the case in taverns, where shameless servants are employed in the hope of attracting customers. In a word, they obey in things that are contrary to the law of God, and against their own consciences. Certainly, their employers are guilty of sin, and of a two-fold sin, when they command or advise them to do things that are unlawful, for they sin against the duty imposed on them by God, according to which they are bound to exhort their dependants to virtue, and to help them in every way possible to save their souls. Nevertheless, the servants, too, are guilty of sin, by obeying their wicked commands, or following their bad advice, through fear or human respect, and by thus preferring their temporal masters to

God, the Supreme Lord of all. The tyrants who persecuted the Christians so cruelly, and tried to rob them of their faith, are lost forever. But so, too, are those Christians who were terrified by them into denying Christ. Ah, unhappy servants, or rather slaves of hell! Of what good will the favor of your masters be to you, if you lose the grace and friendship of God? Will they be able to defend you on the day of judgment, and to save you from the flames of hell? Or will you be able to excuse yourselves by saying: My master or my mistress told me to do so? What! the Judge will say to you, am I not your Supreme Master? Were you not bound to prefer my command to that of your earthly masters?

God must be obeyed, rather than men, after the example of holy servants.

No, a true servant of Jesus Christ does not hesitate to think and say what St. Peter and the other Apostles said to the high-priest, who forbade them to preach the name of Jesus Christ: "We ought to obey God rather than men."[1] A faithful handmaid of Christ thinks and says with undaunted courage: I will obey in all things lawful, but I will not depart a hair's-breadth from the law of God. She would rather sacrifice her wages, allow herself to be ill-treated and turned out of the house, nay, would give up her life, rather than act against her conscience, or disobey the law of God, her Supreme Lord and Master. Read the Lives of the Saints, and you will find beautiful examples of how you should obey. Amongst many other you will read that of St. Arnalph, who was servant to a nobleman. His master, who was very avaricious and severe towards his dependants, told him once to go to certain subjects of his and take their corn from them. Arnalph, who was otherwise most obedient, could not obey that unjust command, for he was more anxious to obey the law of God forbidding injustice, than the will of his master. So he absolutely refused obedience, and could not be moved thereto by the anger and rage of his master, for he was indifferent to both, as long as he did nothing against the will of God, his Supreme Master. Yet he thought he had found a way of avoiding an offence against God, and of appearing at the same time to satisfy his master. Whenever he was sent to extort corn from the peasants, he brought away certain quantities of it from his master's granaries, as if he had taken it from the people. This plan succeeded for a time, until an envious fellow-servant found it out, and reported to his master that there was hardly corn enough left for the support of the house. Arnalph was at

[1] Obedire oportet Deo magis quam hominibus.—Acts v. 29.

once condemned to be punished; but when the granaries were again examined, they were found to be full of corn—an evident proof that God always comes to the assistance of those who, for His sake, and to keep His commandments, refuse to obey the unlawful commands of their temporal masters. Thus write the Bollandists in the Lives of the Saints under the 29th of January. Let this be taken note of by those men and maid-servants who are told in taverns to charge the guests double, or in shops to use unjust weights and measures. Read the history of St. Matrona, who allowed herself to be sentenced to a most cruel death, rather than renounce the faith, or disobey the law of God. Her mistress was a certain fanatical Jewess named Plantilla, who lived in Thessalonica. Certainly, it is not at all advisable for a Catholic to take service with those opposers of our faith, but in those days it was difficult to find service with a Christian family, on account of the bitter persecutions, so that Matrona had to seek employment with this Jewess. She adored Christ secretly, and as often as she found time after her work, she stole into the Church to perform her devotions (would to God that all servants were thus careful of their salvation, and that they gave to God whatever time was over from their work!). But she could not long hide what she was doing, so that Plantilla found it out. One day, as the latter was going to the synagogue, accompanied by Matrona, she remarked that her companion went with her only as far as the door, and then went off to the Christian Church. She then commenced to persecute Matrona in different ways, in order to make her deny Christ; at first she tried mildness, and then severity, but when she saw that all her efforts were in vain, she gave full vent to her fury, and caused Matrona to be tied down and cruelly scourged, after which she had her thrown into a corner of the house, and left four days without food or drink. At the expiration of that time Matrona was again brought out, but as she still courageously refused to do as her mistress wished, she was again beaten most cruelly. This torture was repeated until she gave up her victorious spirit, while engaged in prayer. The detailed account of this martyrdom may be read in Henschen, under the 15th of March. The same fidelity to God was shown by two maid-servants in Japan, of whom Cornelius Hazart writes in his history of the Church in Japan. These two heroically suffered death by the sword; the one because she would not deny Jesus Christ at the command of her heathen master, the other because she refused to gratify her master's lust: "I am a

Christian," she said, in answer to every promise and threat: "and I would rather die than offend God by such a sin." Servants, take pattern by this. Obey your employers,[1] but only when their commands are not against the will of God, your Supreme Lord.

They must obey patiently.

Finally, you must obey contentedly and patiently. There is no doubt that you have many difficulties and annoyances to put up with every day, especially when your employers are hard, fault-finding, captious and suspicious, and many of you might truly say, with the Prophet David: "Thou hast made us a reproach to our neighbors, a scoff and derision to them that are round about us!"[2] But you must think to yourselves: this is the state in which God wishes me to serve Him during my life: this is the cross by which He wishes to bring me to Heaven. Other people have their crosses to bear; my master has his troubles and difficulties with the household; my mistress has her trials with the children, or elsewhere, of which I know nothing, and perhaps she has more to bear than I; therefore I will carry my cross, and bear it patiently for God's sake. I shall always say in my heart: Lord, "Thy will be done!"[3] The trouble is slight and will soon be over; the reward that awaits me is exceeding great, and will last forever. But you must be careful not to lose your great merit and reward in the sight of God, by impatience, or murmuring, or secret discontent, which will not do you a bit of good, but rather make matters worse. Much less should you act like those, of whom there are many in the world, who give vent to their impatience, or take revenge on their employers, by complaining to others, or talking of the private faults of their masters or mistresses. In God's name, what is the use of that? What can you gain by such tittle-tattle? Can you correct those faults by it? If not, why do you speak of them to those whom they do not concern? You thus make yourself guilty of detraction against your employers, and are bound to restore their good name as far as you can. You have offended God, and are bound to do penance sincerely: and besides that, all your trouble goes for nothing, because you lose the merit of your labor and suffering, and cannot hope to be rewarded for them. A fine way to act, indeed! If, in place of murmuring and back-biting, you bore your trouble with

[1] Servi, obedite.

[2] Posuisti nos opprobrium vicinis nostris, subsannationem et derisum his, qui sunt in circuitu nostro.—Ps. xliii. 14.

[3] Fiat voluntas tua!

patience and a good intention, what a beautiful crown you would prepare for yourself in Heaven, and what a comfort it would be for your conscience to know that you were thus willingly bearing the cross with your suffering Saviour! Remember that the God whom you serve in the person of your employers is, as He says Himself, "a God of patience," but also, "a God of consolation,"[1] as the Apostle calls Him, who will lighten, with His heavenly consolations, the burden you have to bear.

Conclusion and exhortation to servants to obey their employers in the manner described.

I conclude by repeating the exhortation of St. Paul: "Servants, obey them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ."[2] Serve them faithfully, obey them patiently! Encourage yourselves to do this by the example of the great King of Heaven and earth, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who for our sake "took the form of a servant;"[3] who says of Himself, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister;"[4] who was not only obedient to His heavenly Father even unto death,[5] but was also subject to poor mortals, to a poor virgin and a poor carpenter: "He was subject to them."[6] That is all we read of Christ in the Gospel, from His twelfth to His thirtieth year. Ah, if you only knew how fortunate you are, you would not change with any master or mistress, but would rejoice and congratulate yourselves that you have the Son of God as a companion in your state of life, and that you can thus more easily resemble Him whom we must all be like, if we wish to enter Heaven. In fact, if you do your duty well, and for the love of God, you are much better off than many rich lords and ladies, and on the day of judgment you will take precedence of the highest potentates of earth, for then no notice will be taken of earthly rank. You will not be asked whether you were master or servant, mistress or maid, but whether you lived a just and pious life, according to your state, and fulfilled your duty properly, as the Apostle says, speaking of servants: "Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man shall do, the same shall he receive from the Lord, whether he be bond or free."[7] As far as the per-

[1] Deus autem patientiæ et solatii.—Rom. xv. 5.
[2] Servi, obedite dominis carnalibus cum timore, in simplicitate cordis vestri, sicut Christo.
[3] Formam servi accipiens.
[4] Non veni ministrari, sed ministrare.—Matth. xx. 28.
[5] Factus obediens usque ad mortem.—Philipp. ii. 8.
[6] Erat subditus illis.—Luke ii. 51.
[7] Scientes, quoniam unusquisque, quodcunque fecerit bonum, hoc recipiet a Domino, sive servus, sive liber.—Ephes. vi. 8.

son is concerned, one is as good in the sight of God as another. If your employers do not perform their duty well and in a Christian manner, they will be separated from you, to their unspeakable confusion, and will be cast into exterior darkness. If you do your duty, and lead a pious, Christian life, serving your masters with fidelity, patience, and obedience, you will be placed on the right hand of your Judge, and will hear the consoling words from the mouth of your Heavenly Father: "Call the laborers and pay them their hire,"[1] and with what indescribable joy you will hear Jesus Christ say to you: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful," for a short time, to Me, and to thy temporal master, "I will place thee over many things;" come now, "enter into the joy of thy Lord,"[2] a blessing that I wish you with all my heart. Amen.

FIFTY-SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE EVIL OF BEING TOO MUCH OCCUPIED.

Subject.

A life that is too full of earthly cares and troubles is, in the sight of God, an idle, useless, and therefore unchristian life.—*Preached on the second Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Et cœperunt omnes simul excusare.—Luke xiv. 18.
"And they began all at once to make excuse."

Introduction.

The lives of many men resemble stagnant water, that, because it has no motion, can generate nothing but worms and vermin. Such is the life of the idle man who wastes his precious time in mere trifles, and is of no use to any one in the world, neither to God, to his neighbor, nor to himself. The lives of many other men resemble a raging torrent that is always hurrying on its

[1] Voca operarios, et redde illis mercedem.—Matth. xx. 8.

[2] Euge, serve bone et fidelis, quia super pauca fuisti fidelis, super multa te constituam. Intra in gaudium Domini tui.—Matth. xxv. 21.

course without rest or repose; such are the lives of those who are involved in a multiplicity of labors, cares, and unceasing occupations, and whose efforts are directed solely to temporal things, with a view to gaining possession of perishable goods, or of increasing those they possess already, so that they have no time left during the day to think of working for the welfare of their souls, or for Heaven. The parable of to-day's Gospel gives us an exact picture of this kind of people. The guests who were invited could not even spare time to come to the great feast (by which is meant partly the Blessed Eucharist, and partly the kingdom of Heaven). And why was that? "I have bought a farm," said one, "and I must needs go out and see it."[1] Said the second: "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them."[2] The third said: "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."[3] Thus, "they began all at once to make excuse,"[4] and not one of them tasted the supper to which they were all invited. Now, my dear brethren, although a life of that kind does not seem to lead to sin as much as an idle life, yet it is not a Christian life, and cannot lead to Heaven, as I shall now show.

Plan of Discourse.

A life that is too full of earthly cares and troubles is, in the sight of God, an idle, useless, and therefore unchristian life. Such is the whole subject. Let us, then, so manage our temporal business, that we do not lose eternal goods.

That is the conclusion, which we beg of Thee, O God, to effect in us through the merits of Mary and our holy angels guardian.

What is understood by a too busy life.

I do not speak now of those occupations which are unlawful and contrary to the Christian law, such as undertaking and defending unjust law-suits, making money by dishonest tricks and usurious contracts, cheating in buying and selling, or offering bad books and pictures for sale, and similar sinful occupations; for as a matter of course such things are wrong and cannot lead to Heaven. I speak of temporal cares that are usual amongst men, and are not bad in themselves, nor are used for a bad purpose; of domestic employments that are lawful and even necessary for

[1] Villam emi, et necesse habeo exire, et videre illam.—Luke xiv. 18.
[2] Juga boum emi quinque, et eo probare illa.—Ibid. 19.
[3] Uxorem duxi, et ideo non possum venire.—Ibid. 20.
[4] Cœperunt omnes simul excusare.

the support of one's family and to keep up one's position; of occupations such as are usual among servants in their daily work and attendance on their masters, among workmen in their workshops, among traders in their business, among lawyers and attorneys in the cases intrusted to them, among officials in their employments, among the higher authorities in their efforts for the common weal, in a word, among all men in what concerns their daily temporal occupations.

A life of that kind is an idle one in the sight of God.

Now, when a man gives himself to such occupations so much that he has his hands and his thoughts full of them, so that he has no time to recollect himself during the day, and to do something for the service of God and the salvation of his soul, such a life is an idle, useless, and therefore unchristian life in the sight of God; not because the time is spent in doing nothing, but because too much is done, so that there is no leisure for the most important occupation of all, and that which ought to be done first. I will now prove that to you, my dear brethren.

For our one most important business is the care of our souls.

The end for which alone we are created and placed in this world is to serve God, to know Him, to love Him above all things with our whole heart, and thereby to work out our salvation, to seek the kingdom of God, to gain Heaven, as even little children know who have learned their catechism. This is the chief business of all men, without exception, no matter what may be their age, state, or condition. This is the business that must be undertaken and carried on every day by the higher authorities in their government, by officials in their employment, by lawyers in their cases, by merchants in their business, by workmen in their daily labor, by servants in their situations. All are here on earth for the one sole purpose, to know God, to love Him, to serve Him, to save their souls and to gain Heaven. Nor can any one doubt this truth. Besides, you must all confess that the greater and more important a business is, the more time, diligence, care, labor, and attention it requires; the greater the good we hope to gain by success, the greater the loss and injury we have to dread if we fail. Is not that so? Certainly, and I repeat, there can be no doubt of it. Further, you must also admit that a man, no matter what he may be, can have no greater or more important business in the world, than the care of his soul and the service of God, for on that alone it depends whether he is to rejoice forever with his God in a place of endless delights, or to be tortured forever with the demons in an abyss of all imaginable torments. Can any other business be compared with this? Certainly not. Pru-

dence in managing a business, cleverness in conducting law-suits, daring undertakings in war, wise and prudent legislation,—all these things could be called mere child's play in comparison with the business of our souls. "For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul," after all his labor and trouble? "Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?"[1] Such are the infallible words of the Son of God. So far, my dear brethren, we are dealing with undoubted truths.

This cannot be consistent with a too busy life.

And now I ask you, is it credible that those men who, as I have said, are too much given to worldly cares and occupations, and who spend day after day and year after year in them, can give the necessary care to the great and most important business of their souls? How is it possible for them to do so? If a man takes any business really to heart, he devotes his time and attention to it. If I want to work out something that is of great importance to me, I think and study about it for hours to see how I shall begin it; it is in my mind almost all day and all night; I go about and am always busied about it without feeling tired: no time is too long, no expense too great, no work too hard for me to work out my plan. Now, how much thought, consideration, care, labor, and diligence do men who are busied with worldly things give to the business of their souls during the day? They give the least possible time, nay, they can hardly spare a serious thought for it; nor can it well be otherwise because our understanding is limited and cannot attend to two different things at the same time, so as to give both the proper share of attention; so that when a man is wholly occupied with temporal and earthly things, he must necessarily neglect the business of his immortal soul, and put it aside.

Proved by a simile from Holy Scripture.

When the Israelites were a source of great trouble to Pharao, king of Egypt, and were asking leave, through Moses their prophet, to go into the wilderness to worship God, what did Pharao do to distract their minds from that thought? He told his officers to double the tasks of the Israelites, so that they should not have a moment's idleness: "Let them be oppressed with works," he said; "for they are idle, and therefore they cry, saying: Let us go and sacrifice to our God." Therefore, "let them be oppressed with works, and let them fulfil them, that

[1] Quid enim prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur? Aut quam dabit homo commutationem pro anima sua?—Matth. xvi. 26.

they may not regard lying words,"[1] that they may not have time to think of their God and of sacrificing to Him. The infernal Pharao uses the same crafty plan to keep most men of the world away from the service of God and the care of their souls; he thinks: I will give them plenty of work.[2] Early in the morning, when they awake, I will fill their minds with all sorts of business and domestic cares, and so I will take away from God the best part of the day, which He especially wishes for. During the whole day they must remain busied in their shops or offices, so that they will have no time to think of God and of their immortal souls seriously and earnestly. And so it is in reality, says St. Augustine, with all those who devote themselves excessively to worldly cares. He says, referring to the above-quoted text: "Whereby it seems to me to be meant that when the mind is too much occupied with merely earthly things, it is void of God and of heavenly things."[3] Out of the twenty-four hours of the day these men can hardly find one in which to hear Mass for the honor of God; they have no time to collect their thoughts so as to make the good intention of offering up their work to God and thereby increasing their merit; no time in the evening before going to rest to thank God, to examine their conscience and to purify it from sin by renewing their contrition; no time on Sundays and holy-days to hear a sermon; no time during the month to approach the sacraments, to cleanse themselves from sin and to strengthen their souls with the Bread of life. In a word, their temporal cares and occupations are so numerous that they have hardly any time left to seek the Kingdom of God, and yet, that is the most important affair of all and requires all one's time.

Explained by another simile.

The miserable condition of such souls is explained in the 9th chapter of the Book of Judges, by the parable of the trees; such are the words of the Sacred Text: "The trees went to anoint a king over them;"[4] as if they had held a council among themselves and said: See, all living creatures have their superiors: men have kings and princes; four-footed beasts have the lion, birds have the eagle as their king; even serpents and bees

[1] Opprimantur operibus, vacant enim, et idcirco vociferantur, dicentes: Eamus, et sacrificemus Deo nostro: opprimantur operibus, et expleant ea, ut non acquiescant verbis mendacibus.—Exod. v. 8, 9.

[2] Opprimantur operibus.

[3] Ut mihi videtur significari nimis intentum humanis actionibus animum Deo quodammodo vacuari.

[4] Ierunt ligna, ut ungerent super se regem.—Judges ix. 8.

have a sovereign ; and we, too, who have life and who produce such pleasant fruit, must not be without a king. No, it is time for us to elect one. "And they said to the olive tree : Reign thou over us," but the latter excused itself, and why ? "Can I leave my fatness, which both gods and men make use of, to come to be promoted among the trees ?"[1] Its meaning was : If I were king, I should be too much occupied with the affairs of government, and should lose the oil which I have hitherto produced for gods and men ; no, I cannot make up my mind to do that ; select what king you will ; it is better for me to remain as I am, and to continue to work for the good of mankind. Thus spoke the olive tree.

Such men cannot have true devotion towards God.

Mark, my dear brethren, in this answer, the first bad quality of those souls who are too much given to worldly occupations. The prayer of the Prophet David to God was : "Let my soul be filled as with marrow and fatness,"[2] that is, with a special zeal and a tender devotion for Thee and Thy heavenly goods, for in the same Psalm he describes how he watched to the Lord his God at break of day, and how his soul thirsted for Him ; how he always blessed God, and stuck close to Him, etc. Find now, if you can, the spirit of devotion amongst those Christians who are buried in worldly cares ! Devotion, indeed, zeal and love for God ! Where could you discover a trace of that in such people ? Certainly not in their daily occupations, for they savor of the earth, and of earthly things, and of course can awaken only earthly love and desire. Even in the very devotions they now and then perform, there is no true piety ; the confessions and communions they make, if they do even that much for God and their souls ; the Masses they hear because they are bound to do so on Sundays and holy-days, and are driven to it through fear of hell ; the vocal prayers they say on their beads or out of their books during Mass ; how do they get through all that ? Without savor or salt, without fervor or love of God, with a hundred distractions that come from their daily occupation, like the sleep of a hunter, who in his dreams follows the game over hill and dale. St. Gregory compares such people, as far as devotion is concerned, to a sick man who is suffering from consumption, and who is almost wasted away, with pale countenance, deeply sunken eyes, prominent nose, hollow cheeks and short breath;

[1] Dixeruntque olivæ : impera nobis. Quæ respondit : numquid possum deserere pinguedinem meam, qua et dii utuntur et homines, et venire, ut inter ligna promovear ?—Judges ix. 8, 9.

[2] Sicut adipe et pinguedine repleatur anima mea.—Ps. lxii. 6.

the whole man is nothing but skin and bone, because the disease slowly dries up all the marrow and vigor of the body. In the same state, he says, is the soul of one whom too many worldly occupations deprive of all devotion and design of heavenly things.

Nor true peace and repose of heart.

Let us return to the simile of the trees, my dear brethren. Since the olive tree refused to govern them, because it did not wish to leave its fatness, they addressed themselves to another tree: "And the trees said to the fig-tree: Come thou and reign over us."[1] No, was the answer again, that duty is too difficult for me. "Can I leave my sweetness and my delicious fruits, and go to be promoted among the other trees?"[2] There are many trees and plants in the mountains and forests, in the valleys and gardens. If I have to look after them all, I should very soon lose the sweetness of the repose that I now enjoy. "Can I leave my sweetness?"[3] No, I cannot and will not. There we have another great misfortune that the soul suffers by being too much taken up with earthly things. It can, as a general rule, have no peace or joy of heart, since it is continually disquieted and distracted from morning till night. It enjoys no peace in its understanding, which is filled with all sorts of thoughts and schemes. No peace in its will, which is disturbed by different desires and wishes. No peace in its body, which has neither rest nor repose, and is continually fatigued in its search after riches. No peace in its conscience, which is stained with all kinds of faults and sins. So that poor slaves of this kind have no peace with God nor themselves, and generally speaking, not even with their fellow mortals, from whom they expect and fear many an annoyance and difficulty in their business.

Nor time nor opportunity to receive the divine inspirations.

"And the trees said to the vine," continues the parable, "come thou and reign over us,"[4] you are the best of all the trees. But what answer did they get? A reasonable excuse, as before: "Can I forsake my wine that cheereth God and men, and be promoted among the other trees?"[5] Wine, my dear brethren, when it is not taken in excess, invigorates and cheers us, and drives away melancholy. Such, too, is the effect of the divine inspirations and graces, by which the human un-

[1] Dixeruntque ligna ad arborem ficum: veni, et super nos regnum accipe.—Judges ix. 10.

[2] Quæ respondit eis: numquid possum deserere dulcedinem meam fructusque suavissimos, et ire, ut inter cætera ligna promovear?—Ibid. 11.

[3] Numquid possum deserere dulcedinem meam?

[4] Locutaque sunt ligna ad vitem: veni, et impera nobis.—Ibid. 12.

[5] Quæ respondit eis: numquid possum deserere vinum meum, quod lætificat Deum et homines, et inter ligna cætera promoveri?—Ibid. 13.

derstanding is enlightened with heavenly knowledge, and the will, otherwise inclined to evil, is driven with a gentle violence to abandon evil and do good, and to rejoice in doing so. This precious wine is seldom tasted by those who wear away their lives in a multiplicity of earthly cares. For their thoughts are so full of those cares, their souls are so blind and so deaf to good, that the divine inspirations, which are absolutely necessary to help in the salvation of the soul, can find no entrance to, no influence over them.

For these inspirations require a heart prepared to receive them.

As I have said elsewhere, and according to the general teaching of theologians, the Almighty God does not give His lights and graces at all times, nor in all places, but in certain circumstances, namely, when the soul is prepared and disposed to receive those graces. At least, it is certain that the good thoughts and inspirations suggested by the Holy Ghost, at a time when one is ill prepared for them, have not near as much power and influence to move the human heart to good and to effect that good in it, as when the heart is willing and ready to receive them. The great light and grace that in such a wonderful manner made St. Ignatius Loyola the Founder of the Society of Jesus, and changed him from a soldier of the world into a valiant champion of Jesus Christ, if it had come to him when he was still an officer in the army and full of the distractions and disquiet of a military life, trying to defend the fortress of Pampelona against the enemy, could we imagine that that grace would have conquered his heart in such circumstances? That would have been a fine time, indeed, for grace to work in his heart! But afterwards, when he was lying wounded in bed, away from all human conversation, and was engaged in reading the Lives of the Saints (which was the only book he could get, though he asked for some other history to read), that was the proper time in which his heart was really prepared to receive light and grace from God, and to follow the heavenly call in a most heroic manner, as the event proved.

Which they can hardly have in the constant turmoil of business.

Now, tell me, my dear brethren, what time or place for convenient entrance do the divine inspirations and graces find, in the hearts of people who are too much occupied with the world? When they are asleep at night wearied with their work? No, because their reason is then asleep too. When they are hearing Mass on Sundays? No, for though their bodies are present in the Church, their hearts, as we have seen already, are busied elsewhere with a thousand distracting cares. Perhaps during the

day, in the midst of their schemes and plans and undertakings, grace may find its way to them. No, because they are not then engaged in heavenly things, and their hearts are not prepared or disposed to receive supernatural lights and graces. The only opportunity they might give to the divine goodness of enlightening their hearts and bringing them to a knowledge of themselves, would be in the sermons on Sundays and holy-days, but they seldom or never come to hear a sermon, because they have some business to attend to at the time. Or else they may now and then hear a part of a sermon, which can make no impression on them. Another chance they might give to the Almighty to speak to them, would be by frequent confession and communion. But they have no time for that, they very seldom approach the Sacraments during the year. And would to God that they received them even at Easter with the proper dispositions! Again, a proper time would be during morning prayer, and especially in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. But their manifold occupations take that time from them. They might read a spiritual book, or think of some of the truths of faith, of death, of the strict justice of God, of the joys of Heaven, of the torments of hell, and so on, but they know nothing of those things, they have no time for them, and of course they seldom or never taste the divine wine, that is, the inspirations and graces that God would give them to work out their salvation, if they were prepared to receive them.

Therefore they lead a useless life before God.

At last the trees succeeded in getting a king. And what one did they get, do you think? "And all the trees said to the bramble: Come thou and reign over us."[1] It was the only one that immediately accepted the troublesome office offered it. "If indeed you mean to make me king, come ye and rest under my shadow."[2] Mark that; a dry and useless bush that can produce nothing but sharp thorns, accepts authority over others. That is a true symbol, my dear brethren, of one who is too much involved in worldly cares, who can bring forth no fruit worthy of eternal life, whose labor produces only sharp thorns that incessantly pierce his heart and his mind, that is, only thoughts, cares, and labor that are useless for Heaven, and with which he plagues himself day and night. Certainly that is a troubled and dangerous state for a soul to be in! And an idle life that must

[1] Dixeruntque omnia ligna ad rhamnum: veni, et impera super nos.—Judges ix. 14.

[2] Quæ respondit eis: si vere me regem constituistis, venite et sub umbra mea requiescite. —Ibid. 15.

be in the sight of God, which cannot by any means lead to Heaven!

They cannot excuse themselves by pleading necessity.

But what, they ask, is the meaning of that? I must do what I have to do. How could I act otherwise? The daily cares, trouble, and business that I am occupied in from morning till night, are required by my state of life, the office in which I am employed, the duties intrusted to me, the trade I follow, the profession I exercise, the family I must support decently and respectably, render this necessary, and you have often told us that it is the will and decree of God that we should be thus occupied. How can I leave my business that must be attended to, to spend my time in works of devotion? That is a fine excuse indeed, and is suggested by self-love, by the concupiscence of the eyes, by insatiable avarice, and by sloth and laziness in the service of God! I admit that I have often told you that you must diligently perform the duties of your state of life, but you should remember that I told you at the same time to perform them with your hearts constantly raised to God. Is that the case with those who are buried in worldly business? I will not urge against you what generally happens with people like you, that you can find time enough to spare from your business for things that suit your own inclinations. If there is an interesting conversation at home, if you are invited out to meet pleasant company, or for an evening entertainment, if your self-love easily persuades you that another hour's sleep in the morning will do you no harm, oh, then you can easily put aside your cares and your business till later on, while you have hardly any time left for the one thing necessary, for which alone we are on this earth, the service of God and the salvation of your soul.

Because it should not hinder the business of the soul.

You must know, my dear brethren, that the will and decree of the Almighty God bind no one to a duty, business, or occupation, that would leave no time for the divine service and for working out one's salvation, for all other cares and occupations, no matter what they are, must be used solely as means to serve God, and to save one's soul. Everything that cannot be directed to this end, is useless and worthless. In a word, the state, office, employment, or business that hinders me, generally speaking, from hearing daily Mass (except in the case of workmen who must begin their work early in the morning and cannot interrupt it, and they should make up for not hearing Mass by often renewing their good intention and raising their hearts to God), or that prevents me from hearing sermons, as a general rule,

on Sundays and holy-days, or that keeps me away from catechism, or from the frequent reception of the sacraments, or prevents me from sometimes during the day thinking of God and my salvation, and renewing my good intention,—such a business as that would be, once for all, a hindrance to my eternal salvation. As a general rule, I say, for sometimes a necessary work of Christian charity, or other sudden emergencies incidental to my occupation or state of life, that demand immediate attention, may prevent me from practising my usual devotions; that is quite another thing. But if such hindrances were to arise as a general rule, they would be obstacles in the way of my salvation, and therefore, if I am concerned about that, I should resign my employment, or give up my business, or manage matters so that I can attend to my devotions without difficulty. Not without cause does St. Paul warn the Corinthians in the 7th chapter of his First Epistle to them: "This, therefore, I say, brethren: the time is short," that we have to live on this earth. "It remaineth that they also who have wives, be as if they had none; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not;"[1] that is to say, they who are engaged in worldly pursuits, must keep their hearts as detached from them, as if they did not care much about them, and reckoned the business of the soul as the only important one.

Folly of those who thus give themselves excessively to worldly business.

And what a folly it is to devote one's self to worldly things to such an extent as to lose eternal joys! To weary one's mind, to fatigue one's body, to live in constant turmoil, and to forget one's soul that must live forever! We might say to such people as St. Paulinus said to one who was too much given to study, so that he had no time left to serve God: "You have time to be a philosopher, but you have no time to be a Christian."[2] The same thing, I repeat, might be said to those people: You have time enough, you labor and toil to become a good tradesman, a thriving merchant, an industrious servant, a skilful lawyer, a provident householder; but you have no time to be a good Christian,[3] a true servant of God, a careful guardian of your own soul, an heir of eternal riches! Unhappy martyrs of the world! you wear yourselves out, and spend your lives in working for the world, for something that you must soon leave behind, and you

[1] Hoc itaque dico fratres: tempus breve est. Reliquum est, ut et qui habent uxores, tanquam non habentes sint, et qui emunt tanquam non possidentes, et qui utantur hoc mundo, tanquam non utantur.—I. Cor. vii. 29–31.

[2] Vacat tibi, ut sis philosophus, et non vacat, ut sis Christianus.

[3] Et non vacat, ut sis Christianus.

forget that on which everything depends—to work for the kingdom of Heaven! And for whose advantage do they thus toil and labor? For their children, their heirs and descendants; because they certainly do not require to work so hard and so excessively to support themselves. And what folly that is: to plague and wear one's self out for the good of others, and forget one's self, meanwhile! What good will it be to you that others can live and enjoy themselves on what you earn by your hard labor, if you yourself must go into the house of your eternity poor in merits, bare and naked of good works, and in extreme want? Tell me; would you allow one of your veins to be opened, until all your blood was exhausted, so as to be able to give some of it every day to your children and your heirs? I do not think you would be so foolish, for you would think more of your life, which is dearer and more necessary to you; and yet, you give away the precious time of your life, which you should use for the benefit of your immortal soul, and for no other purpose, you give it away every day, for the use and profit of others who belong to you, until it is all gone, and there is nothing more left for your own eternal life.

They will condemn it too late on their death-bed.

Alas, what a poor consolation it will be for you to remember on your death-bed that you have enriched others by your labor, but have nothing for yourself for all eternity! How will you appear before the judgment-seat of God, when He will demand a strict account of every moment of your life, and will ask you how, and in what you employed it? Will your children, your descendants, your heirs, or your masters, whom you have enriched at the expense of your soul, be then able to answer your Judge for you, to defend you, and to prove their gratitude for the wealth you left them by gaining Heaven for you?

Proved by an example.

Alas, how you will then howl and weep, like the dying soldier, of whom Vincentius Belluacensis writes. In his last moments he was visited by a great man, whom he had served for many years with great diligence and faithfulness. His master asked him if he could do nothing to comfort him, and said that he would be willing to do all in his power. Ah, said the sick man, be so kind as to give me strength to live only a single hour without the intolerable pain that I now suffer; or if I must die, then see that I shall be able to enjoy happiness in the next life. I ask nothing more from you as a reward for having served you so long and so faithfully. My dear man, said the other, I cannot do that; it is not in my power. God alone can grant a request of that

kind. Oh, woe to me, then, said the sick man; unhappy and foolish wretch that I am, I have lost all my labor and trouble for nothing! See, he said to those who were standing round, how uselessly I have squandered the precious time that God gave me to work out my salvation, how I have wasted it in the service of one who cannot free me for one hour from the pain I suffer, nor help me to escape the eternal torments that I have such good reason to fear in the next life. Oh, my dear people, learn wisdom from my folly; give the years of your lives to God, and to God alone, for He alone can free you from the pain and anguish of death. He alone has power to save you from eternal torments. He alone can give you eternal glory in Heaven, as a reward for the slight service you render Him for a short time. Thus speaking, and full of repentance and sorrow, he breathed his last. Such, too, will one day be the case with all who, through excessive worldly cares, spend their lives for the advantage of others, and neglect their own souls.

Conclusion and exhortation to be zealous in the business of the soul.

I conclude, my dear Christians, by exhorting you all, in the words of the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "Have pity on thy own soul, pleasing God."[1] Have pity on your own souls first of all! Whatever your business may be, do it well and faithfully, as your duty requires, but do not forget yourselves; let your first and principal care be the business of your immortal souls! When engaged in your daily occupations, often raise up your hearts to God, renew your good intention, and say in your own minds by a rapid thought: Lord, this is for Thy sake, because it pleases Thee, I do it, etc. You will thus serve God faithfully, and work out your salvation in the midst of your labor and your worldly occupations. The Catholic Church prays: "May we so pass through temporal goods;"[2] mark these words, so pass, not fixing our desires on them, much less filling our hearts with them, but passing through them, like a traveller who cares little for the countries he goes through, because he does not intend to live in them. Let us, then, so pass through those temporal things, "that we may not lose eternal riches."[3] Amen.

[1] Miserere animæ tuæ placens Deo.—Eccl. xxx. 24.
[2] Sic transeamus per bona temporalia. [3] Ut non amittamus æterna.

FIFTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

ON THE GUILTINESS OF A TOO BUSY LIFE.

Subject.

A life that, in any state or condition, is too busy, cannot be without guilt, nor can it lead to Heaven, although each and every occupation of the day may be in itself lawful, and without sin.—*Preached on the third Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Quæ mulier, habens drachmas decem, si perdiderit drachmam unam, nonne accendit lucernam, et everrit domum, et quærit diligenter, donec inveniat?—Luke xv. 8.

"What woman having ten groats: if she lose one groat, doth not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently, until she find it?"

Introduction.

Is it worth while to go to so much trouble to find a miserable coin? Is it worth while to light a candle, to sweep the house from top to bottom, and to search every hole and corner until it is found? By this simile Jesus Christ wished to show the envious Pharisees, who were murmuring against Him, because He received sinners, what good reason He had to seek a soul lost in sin, with the greatest eagerness and with unceasing toil, and to rejoice with the whole court of Heaven at finding it when it does penance. For, His meaning was: If the children of the world give themselves such trouble, and work so hard for a worthless thing, such as a single sheep, or a groat, have I not far greater reason to trouble myself, and to use the utmost diligence, in order to save a soul that is made to my own image, and that I will redeem with my precious Blood? This conclusion, my dear brethren, is evident, but it also condemns the folly and blindness of most men who, for the sake of finding, keeping, or increasing earthly and transitory goods, give themselves no end of trouble, while they shamefully neglect their precious souls and their eternal happiness, on which everything depends. On last

Sunday I said something about this folly and blindness, when I showed that the life of a Christian, who is so much occupied with temporal cares and labor, that he has little time during the day to serve God properly, and to attend to his soul, is an idle and useless life in the sight of God, and, consequently, is not a Christian life and cannot lead to Heaven. And now, you might ask, why is it an unchristian life? The daily business and occupation of my life is not sinful, nor contrary to the divine law; how, then, can there be any harm in it, so that it cannot lead me to Heaven? That is the question, my dear brethren, that I will now answer.

Plan of Discourse.

A life that in any state or condition, is too busy, cannot be without grief, nor can it lead to Heaven, although each and every occupation of the day may be in itself lawful and without sin. Such is the subject, which will be followed by an instruction as to how and in what manner we must perform the troublesome duties of our state and occupation, so that they may be no obstacle to our attending to the business of our souls.

Grant us Thy light and grace to this end, O Holy Ghost! We expect it from Thee through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

A multiplicity of works, each of which is lawful, can be sinful.

In order to explain clearly the basis of my subject, I must remind you that theologians reckon it an invalid and illogical conclusion to say: Each work that I perform is in itself lawful, therefore it is lawful for me to perform many such works together; or, if I live in a certain way for one day without committing sin thereby, I can live every day in the same way without sin. Such a conclusion is thoroughly illogical. I will prove it to you: for instance, there are a hundred glasses of wine on the table, any of which may be drunk without sin, nay, several of them may be drunk without exceeding the bounds of Christian temperance. Now, if I were to argue from that as follows: since I can drink any of those glasses of wine to-day without sin, therefore I can take the whole hundred of them without sin; what would you think of that kind of reasoning, my dear brethren? Of course you must say that the conclusion is wrong, for any one who drinks such an enormous quantity of wine would certainly lose his reason and get drunk, and that is not at all lawful. The drunkenness is not caused by the first, nor second, nor third

glass of wine, nor by any glass in particular, but rather by the number taken. Nay, it would be a mortal sin to take even one glass with the intention of taking the others also, and so of getting drunk.

Proved by an idle, luxurious life.

To stick to our subject. Consider a person who leads an idle, luxurious life: he sleeps late every morning, spends hours before the glass dressing, receives and pays numbers of visits, goes out walking, spends his time in amusing and enjoying himself, and these are the principal occupations of his life. What think you of it? Is it lawful? Can such a life lead to Heaven? But if you consider each of these occupations in itself, you cannot say that any one of them is unlawful or sinful; for it is not a sin to sleep an hour longer than the usual time, nay, it is often useful and necessary, in order to refresh the wearied body; it is no sin to look at one's self in the glass, nor to dress becomingly; becomingly, I say, because it is never lawful to dress in a scandalous manner, even if it be the fashion to do so; it is not a sin to eat and drink what one is fond of, and what tastes well, and if one has a proper intention in doing so, it becomes a work meritorious of eternal life; it is not a sin to visit a friend, nor to be visited by him, for that is often required by courtesy, nay, by Christian charity and mercy; it is no sin to take a walk, nor to play an honest game in company, nor to amuse one's self lawfully; nor is it unlawful to spend a whole day, or even three or four days, in that apparently idle, useless, and luxurious manner, for that is often required in the way of recreation, or to recover one's health or good spirits, and of course, when the good intention is not wanting, it will conduce to eternal salvation. You may see now, that a person who leads a luxurious life may do nothing the whole day long that is unlawful in itself, nay, that he might merit Heaven by everything he does. But to make a rule of living in that fashion, to make it one's only occupation, to spend weeks, months, and years in that way,—could a life like that, I ask again, be excused from sin? Certainly not; because it is not a Christian life; it is not a penitential life, according to the Gospel; it is not the rough and narrow way that alone leads to Heaven; it is not the way of the cross, on which the elect of Jesus Christ travel; it is not doing violence to one's self to gain Heaven, which the violent alone can bear away; it is not a life like that of Jesus Christ, who bore hunger, poverty, humiliation, persecution, scourging, thorns, nails, thirst, and a cruel and miserable death on the Cross, to gain eternal life for us,

whom His heavenly Father has given as an example to all men, that they may follow Him to the best of their ability, and who, as St. Paul says, elects no one to share in His eternal life, unless those who, as He foresees, will live conformably to His example. A life of that kind is evidently an idle, luxurious, effeminate, and of course, vicious life, that follows the broad road "which leadeth to destruction."[1] Therefore, they who live in that way, cannot excuse themselves by saying: We do no harm; all that we do during the day is lawful, and not forbidden, etc. By all means, I admit that everything you do is lawful in itself; but if you reckon all up together, and make up your lives of such actions alone, you live in an unchristian and vicious manner. And that is evident enough from the fact that you do little or nothing of what you ought to do to gain Heaven.

In the same way, we must speak of a too busy life.

You see now, my dear brethren, that the same answer must be given to the excuses of those who are too much wrapped up in worldly cares. Who can accuse me of leading a sinful life? they ask. I do nothing wrong by being careful in my duty, profession, office, or employment. I answer, as the schoolmen say: "Granted;"[2] I admit that everything you do is lawful; it is lawful for you to run about here and there, and to be diligent in the service of your temporal master; it is lawful to buy and sell, and to make honest profit; lawful to write, and study, and practise law, and hear what is to be said on both sides of a case; lawful to be careful in the duty one has undertaken to perform; and I grant you even more than that, for not only are these things lawful, but they are necessary to you, and if you do them with the right intention, you will merit Heaven by them. But taking them all together, if you are so buried in them that you neglect the business of your immortal soul, that you have no time to hear a daily Mass, or to listen to a sermon on Sundays and holy-days, nor to read a spiritual book now and then, nor to approach the holy Sacraments often during the year, nor to say your evening prayers and settle your accounts with God, by the examination of conscience, nor to think seriously of God frequently during the day—as I said before, that cannot be consistent with a Christian mode of life, nor can it be excused from sin. Your employments, I repeat, are in themselves good, but the fault is that there are too many of them: too much corn tears the sack.

This is sinful, because

It is not always the nature of the food that causes illness of

[1] Quæ ducit ad interitum. [2] Concedo.

the body ; generally speaking, the stomach is overloaded by excessive eating and drinking, and cannot digest the food properly. Fevers, apoplexy, and other diseases follow from the corruption of the blood that is caused by such excess. But it often happens, too, that there is so much blood in the veins that it cannot circulate freely. In the same way, it is not the nature of worldly occupations, but their multiplicity that distracts the human heart from heavenly things, chains it down to the world, prevents us from serving God and working for our souls as we ought, and consequently causes the illness and eternal death of the soul. Those men who were invited to the feast, as we read in the Gospel of last Sunday, had also their lawful and important business to attend to, and therefore they excused themselves from coming. I must needs see the farm I have bought ; I must try the five yoke of oxen I have lately purchased ; I must celebrate my marriage feast.[1] Who would not look upon such excuses as valid ? And yet, God, who compares Himself to the master of the house, was so angry at the refusal these men gave Him, that He declared solemnly : "None of those men that were invited shall taste of my supper,"[2] that is, shall gain Heaven. And why ; they had lawful business to excuse them from coming ? But the excuse was invalid ; no business, no matter how lawful or important it is, should hinder a man from coming, when the Lord invites him to come ; it should be abandoned, or else be interrupted or moderated.

it distracts the heart from heavenly things. Shown by a simile.

In the book of Exodus we find an example that will illustrate this. When Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, saw that the latter was always occupied with the government of the Jewish people, he said to him : "What is it that thou dost among the people ? Why sittest thou alone, and all the people wait from morning till night ?"[3] "The people come to me to seek the judgment of God," was Moses' answer ; mark, my dear brethren, what a holy and important business it was : "And when any controversy falleth out among them, they come to me to judge between them, and to show the precepts of God and His laws."[4] What did Jethro say about these holy and important occupations? Had he not cause enough to approve of them? Hear his answer:

Shown by an example from Scripture.

[1] Villam emi ; juga boum emi quinque : uxorem duxi.

[2] Nemo virorum illorum, qui vocati sunt, gustabit cœnam meam.—Luke xiv. 24.

[3] Quid est hoc, quod facis in plebe ? Cur solus sedes, et omnis populus præstolatur de mane usque ad vesperam ?—Exod. xviii. 14.

[4] Venit ad me populus quærens sententiam Dei .... et ostendam præcepta Dei, et leges ejus.—Ibid. 15, 16.

"But he said: The thing thou dost is not good: Thou art spent with foolish labor, both thou and this people that is with thee. The business is above thy strength, thou alone canst not bear it.[1] But hear my words and counsels and God shall be with thee. Be thou to the people in these things that pertain to God, to bring their words to Him; and to show the people the ceremonies and the manner of worshipping, and the way wherein they ought to walk, and the work they ought to do. And provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, in whom there is truth, and that hate avarice, and appoint of them rulers of thousands, and of hundreds, and of fifties, and of tens, who may judge the people at all times: and when any great matter soever shall fall out, let them refer it to thee, and let them judge the lesser matters only. That so it may be lighter for thee, the burden being shared out unto others." Mark the motive he brings forward, my dear brethren: "If thou doest this, thou shalt fulfil the commandment of God, and shalt be able to bear His precepts."[2] Now think of this for a moment: Moses was called to the office he held, by God Himself; all the duties he had to perform, the guiding and governing of the people, were imposed upon him by God; and yet he saw the necessity of following Jethro's advice; the Sacred Scripture says: "And when Moses heard this, he did all things that he had suggested unto him,"[3] and immediately shared the heavy burden of his occupations with others, so that he might have more time to commune with God in prayer. Now if he acted thus, how can they think themselves free from sin who are overwhelmed with business to which they are not always called by the Almighty God, but rather by self-love, worldly vanity, pride, human respect, concupiscence of the eyes, and avarice, so that they hardly find time to serve God and to work for their salvation? No, that cannot be, says St. Augustine; it is quite evident, from the conduct of Moses, that a man who is too much occupied with worldly affairs, cannot serve God and work for his salvation as he ought.

By the doctrine of St. Bernard.

St. Bernard wrote five whole books, which he called *Libros de Consideratione*, to Pope Eugenius, to teach him how he should order his life in the position to which he was called as Head of

[1] At ille: Non bonam, inquit, rem facis: stulto labore consumeris, ... ultra vires tuas est negotium, solus illud non poteris sustinere.—Exod. xviii. 17, 18.

[2] Si hoc feceris, implebis imperium Dei et præcepta ejus poteris sustentare.—Ibid. 23.

[3] Quibus auditis, Moyses fecit omnia, quæ ille suggesserat.—Ibid. 24.

the Church. They are very interesting books to read, especially for those who are much occupied. In the beginning of the first book he describes the unhappy condition of a hard heart which never has any tenderness or devotion towards divine things, no devotion in prayer, no devotion in hearing Mass, or even in Holy Communion; in a word, which does not fear nor love God as it ought. He then addresses Eugenius as follows; mark his impressive words, my dear brethren, and try to remember them: "Eugenius, I speak to you with the respect and reverence I owe you as the Head of the Church, but at the same time with the well-meaning openness of heart which a father must have who loves his son. See, then, that in the midst of the many occupations which the government of the Church entails, you do not forget yourself, nor deprive yourself of the time and the quiet necessary to hold communion with your God. Otherwise, you would be wretched indeed, and it would have been better for you to have remained as a poor monk in your convent. Tell me, I beg of you, what sort of a life is it that consists in giving audiences to strangers the whole day, in receiving and considering petitions, in deciding disputes, in examining ecclesiastical documents, in sending briefs here and there?[1] What will be the end of such a life? If you once devote yourself completely to such accursed occupations,[2] how can you think of your soul? If you continue to bury yourself, in these occupations, so that you have no time for yourself, you will lose all piety, all thought of God, all care of your soul, and you will be like an obdurate Pharao in the chair of St. Peter.[3] I have no doubt that you know this already, and that you sometimes weep bitter tears over the distractions that your occupations cause you. But your tears are no good, unless you change your life.[4] You will perhaps say that it is impossible to do so;[5] that the whole world is resting on your shoulders; that you must open the gate of Heaven to Catholics, heretics, heathens, and infidels; that this requires unceasing care, trouble, and occupation. All very true, Eugenius, but remember that you, too, are one of the many, and that while you are working for others, you must not forget yourself, nay, you must look after yourself first of all; otherwise, what good will it be to you, as our Lord says, to gain all, if you lose your

[1] Quæso te, quale est illud, de mane usque ad vesperam litigare, vel litigantes audire, etc.
[2] Ex quo trahere te habent hæ occupationes maledictæ, etc.
[3] Si pergis, ut cœpisti, ita dare te totum illis, ut nihil tibi relinquas, etc.
[4] Ut frustra deploraveris, si emendare non studueris.
[5] Impossibile id fortasse dixeris.

self?'[1] How much better off will you be if you open the gate of Heaven to the whole world, but close it against yourself? I tell you again, honestly, that if you do not lessen the number of your occupations, and set apart more time to serve God and to work for your salvation, you will never be a Saint in Heaven, although you may be called your Holiness on earth." So far St. Bernard.

This applies to many men of the world.

Now, let us think a little on this, my dear brethren, in a way that may be understood even by little children, who are beginning to use their reason. If a saintly and learned man like St. Bernard confesses before God that he must write several books to a Pope, on whom God has placed, so to say, the care of the whole world, and to speak in those books of nothing else than that Pope's obligation in conscience to reduce the number of his occupations, and to set aside more time for prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, asking light and grace from above, and communing with God; and that, too, because the first, most important, and only business of our lives, is that of our souls; if the holy and learned St. Bernard says that there is no hope of Heaven for the Vicar of Jesus Christ, unless he lessens the number of his daily occupations; if the holy and learned St. Bernard condemns the occupations of a Pope, and calls them accursed, although they are imposed by the Almighty God, although they are necessary for the spiritual government of the Church, and have for their object, among many other important things, the spread of the Catholic faith, the conversion of heretics and infidels, the settling of disputes among the members of the Church, etc.; and although these occupations are not only lawful in themselves, but even holy and meritorious in the highest degree, yet, if St. Bernard condemns them on account of their multiplicity, and because they prevented the Pope from attending to his soul, what name must we give to those multifarious occupations that have no spiritual nor holy end in view, and that are of the earth, earthly? What can we say of the business that has for its sole object to make money, to show off before others, to hold a higher position in the world, to please men, to gain the favor of the great ones of the earth, to care for the mortal body, or to leave one's heirs well off, since such business is, of its very nature, apt to take away the thoughts from God and from salvation? How can they, who are overwhelmed with such occupations, hope to gain Heaven? What words can preachers find impressive enough to arouse the

[1] Alioquin quid tibi prodest, juxta verbum Domini, si universos lucreris, te ipsum perdens?

consciences of such people, and to remind them of their duty and of their obligation to change and amend their lives? But alas, such people do not come to sermons, because they have too much to do; their hearts are too much attached to earthly things, and they do not care for the Word of God, which is, however, most necessary for them. See, there you have a proof of my subject, that, namely, a too busy life, although each of its occupations may be lawful, is not a Christian life, nor is it free from sin, nor can it lead to Heaven.

Confirmed by Scripture.

And such is indeed the case, my dear brethren, for that must be an infallible truth which the Holy Ghost Himself speaks by the Prophet Ezechiel, when addressing the king of Tyre: "By the multitude of thy merchandise, thy inner parts were filled with iniquity."[1] And again He warns all, by the Wise Ecclesiasticus; or as Vatablus reads still more clearly: "My son, meddle not with many matters, and if thou be rich, thou shalt not be free from sin."[2] That is, sin must be committed in a life that is distracted with incessant care and occupation; for under such circumstances one hardly understands clearly; as St. Gregory says: "One can hardly know how often one falls into sin."[3] And if no other sin were committed, which is almost an impossibility, humanly speaking, yet a life of that kind, taken in its entirety, is an idle, useless, and guilty life in the sight of God, for it is an obstacle to the service of God and to the salvation of the soul.

Conclusion and exhortation to all to look after their souls' welfare.

Therefore, if any of you here present lead a life of that kind, and of course I do not know if such is the case, I conclude by addressing you in the words of St. Bernard to Pope Eugenius: "Let this warning now suffice for you, so that you will not give yourself always, nor altogether, to external occupations, but will keep some of your heart and some of your time to consider the state of your soul."[4] In the same way I say to each one of you: Be careful in fulfilling the duties of your state, employment, or occupation; but never forget that you have another most important duty to perform, and that is, to save your soul and gain eternal happiness. See, therefore, that you do not employ too much

[1] In multitudine negotiationis tuæ repleta sunt interiora tua iniquitate.—Ezech. xxviii. 16.

[2] Fili, ne in multis sint actus tui.—Ne in multis negotiis impliceris:—Et si dives fueris, non eris immunis a delicto.—Eccl. xi. 10.

[3] Per quanta delinquat, ignorat.

[4] Sufficit admonitum esse, nec totum te, nec semper dare actioni, sed considerationi aliquid et cordis et temporis sequestrare.

care and diligence in the former, or else you will forget the latter. As long as you are in the stormy sea of this life, says St. Gregory, you must follow the example of those fishes that, by means of their fins, can sometimes raise themselves up near the surface, and sometimes sink down into the depths. You must not resemble those fishes that always remain in the mud and consequently lose the proper flavor of fish, nor yet those that always swim near the top, and are consequently in danger of being caught. A man whom divine providence has called to a busy life must be always able to swim with two fins: sometimes he must sink into the depths of worldly business, and at other times he must raise himself on high to commune with God; nor must he forget either of these duties for the sake of the other.

Instruction as to how occupations are to be ordered.

If you ask me how you must arrange your occupations, so as to perform these two duties properly, and not exceed in either, I will answer you in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice."[1] There you have the proper order of things; of two duties that must be preferred, and must have the first place, which is the more important and necessary; reason itself tells us this, and no one can deny it. Now the most important and necessary business that man has to perform in this life is to serve God and to save his soul. Even children who know anything of their catechism, could tell you to what end man is created; so that this business must have the first place and must be preferred to all others. That conclusion is valid enough. Therefore the first hour of the day should be given to God by prayer, and if possible, by hearing Mass; the first thought, on commencing any business during the day, must be given to Him, by renewing the good intention; the first day in the week (and thereby I mean Sundays and holy-days) must be devoted to God and to the soul alone, by hearing the Word of God in sermons, by spiritual reading, and other pious practices; the first Sunday of every month should certainly belong to God and to the soul, by confession and communion, as is the custom with pious Christians, nor is it forbidden to receive those holy sacraments often during the month, for they are the channels by which the necessary grace of God flows into our souls. And as God must be the beginning, so should He be the end of all our daily labor, by the evening examen of conscience, if we wish to be truly pious and to take due care of our souls.

Even for our temporal profit.

Ah, my dear brethren, if this order were constantly observed,

[1] Quærite primum regnum Dei et justitiam ejus.—Luke xii. 31.

what a great advantage it would bring, not only to our souls, but also to our temporal concerns! How many do we hear complaining and lamenting that with all their labor and trouble they get on very badly; their incomes dwindle away year by year; their salaries are reduced; their debtors do not pay them; they are not able to pay their own creditors; they find it more difficult every day to keep house, etc. What is the cause of all that? Do you wish to know? Then tell me, first, how do you manage your affairs? Do you give to God what belongs to Him? Do you observe due order in your occupations? "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice,"[1] for it is He alone who can bless your labors. Do you do that? Then hear the promise of infallible truth: "And all these things shall be added unto you."[2] But if you invert this order and give to God the last, or even no place at all, on account of your many occupations, what wonder is it that He refuses to bless your work, since you refuse to give what belongs to Him? "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice;" look after your soul first of all! If you say to me as St. Bernard represents Pope Eugenius as excusing himself: I cannot observe that order, because I must attend to my business or work; then I answer with the same Saint: For that very reason you have too much work, and you ought to moderate it, if you hope to gain Heaven.

Great sovereigns observed that order. Shown by examples.

Have you, then, more to do and to hinder you from serving God and attending to your soul, than a Pope, a king, or an emperor, who has the care of a whole country, or of the whole world? We know already the order that one Pope was advised to follow. St. Francis Borgia, who knew Charles V., the celebrated Roman emperor and king of Spain, tells us that that renowned sovereign never allowed a single day to pass without spending a whole hour in the meditation of heavenly things, besides his ordinary prayers and works of piety; and this holy custom he never interrupted, whether he was in his palace in the midst of important state matters, or in the field with his army in all the turmoil of war. One day, while he was engaged in meditation, an ambassador from a powerful sovereign was announced, who desired to see him at once on most important and necessary business that could not be deferred; but Charles sent word to him that he was engaged in a matter of still greater importance, since he was speaking with the divine Majesty about his soul. The same

[1] Quærite primum regnum Dei et justitiam ejus.
[2] Et hæc omnia adjicientur vobis.

great and holy emperor used to keep his coffin in his room, constantly before his eyes, so that he might remember his last end, despise earthly goods, and live in the fear and love of God. That is the way to seek God first.[1] The historian of the Emperor Theodosius the Second relates the following story: A holy hermit, who had spent forty years in the desert, leading a very holy life in the practice of all kinds of austerities, once had a great desire to know whether there was in the world any servant of God who surpassed him in perfection, so that he might learn something from him. God revealed to him that there was such a person, and that was the Emperor Theodosius. The hermit was filled with astonishment on learning that a man who was raised to the summit of earthly glory and happiness could be so holy, and he could not rest until he went to Constantinople and saw that prodigy with his own eyes. The emperor received him kindly and when the hermit asked him how he ordered his life, he answered at once: The government of the empire is intrusted to me by the Almighty God; I try to carry it on as well as I can, for His honor, seeking justice in everything, first of all; otherwise, God receives the first share of everything by prayer. My food is of the commonest kind; I often chastise my body by wearing a hair-shirt; when I have to be present at plays, comedies, and tournaments, in order to keep the people in due bounds, while others are feasting their eyes and ears, I find my own pleasure in secret communion with God. Enough, said the hermit; I can understand it all now; and he went away full of astonishment at finding such sanctity in an imperial court. That is the way to seek first the kingdom of God.

Resolution to imitate them in future.

Now, if this order could be followed by those who had to rule country and people—and who ruled them well, too—amidst all the turmoil and confusion of a court; why, each one of us must conclude, my dear brethren: Why cannot I too observe the same order, and give to my God the first of everything I do, for my cares and labors are not near so great as theirs? I will, then, begin to-day to observe this order, and will continue to do so punctually. I will often call to mind the impressive words of Jesus Christ: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"[2] If I amass great wealth by my incessant care and labor, what will it profit[3] me, if my

[1] Quærite primum regnum Dei.

[2] Quid prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur?—Matth. xvi. 26.

[3] Quid prodest.

soul is poor in merits? If I make a great name for myself before the world, by my diligence, and gain the favor of the great; what will it profit me, if I can find no grace nor favor with God, the Supreme Lord of all? If by my constant labor I can rear my family and leave much wealth to my children and heirs; what will it profit me, if I lose my own soul? No, my soul must be the first and most special object of my care; it must be preferred to everything else. Let my worldly affairs go on as they may, I shall have gained enough, if I can bring my soul to eternal happiness. Amen.

ON THE STATE OF THE RICH.

FIFTY-EIGHTH SERMON.

ON THE GOODNESS OF GOD TOWARDS THE RICH.

Subject.

God shows His good will towards the rich by bestowing on them temporal goods and wealth. Therefore, they owe Him special gratitude and love.—*Preached on the Feast of St. Andrew, Apostle.*

Text.

At illi continuo relictis retibus secuti sunt eum.—Matth. iv. 20. "And they immediately leaving their nets, followed Him."

Introduction.

A great thing, indeed, we might say, that was which Peter and Andrew did when they heard the invitation of Christ, and did as He asked them! For, what had they to leave? "They left their nets;"[1] their worthless fishing nets, with which they had to work hard every day to earn their bread; that was all they had to leave. It is true, as St. Jerome says: "Peter was a poor fisherman who had to work for his daily bread;"[2] but, "Because it is not enough to leave all things, he added that which belongs to perfection and said: We have followed Thee; that is the true sign of Apostles, and believers."[3] In the same way the Gospel of to-day speaks of Peter, and Andrew his brother: "They left their nets and followed Him." And they left them, too, with their whole hearts, so that they were quite detached from all earthly things, and had not even a desire of possessing the least thing in future.

[1] Relictis retibus.

[2] Petrus piscator erat, dives non fuerat, cibos manu et arte quærebat.

[3] Quia non sufficit tantum relinquere, jungit, quod perfectum est: et secuti sumus te quod proprii Apostolorum est, atque credentium.

Now, my dear brethren, if these Apostles had been rich and wealthy, who knows whether they would then have been so ready to leave all things and to follow the poor Christ? It would in all probability have been with them, as it was afterwards with the young man, of whom St. Matthew writes elsewhere, and who went away sad, when Christ invited him to leave all things; why did he do so? "For he had great possessions."[1] All the holy Fathers say, therefore, that God bestows a great benefit on many men, by causing them to be born and to live in poverty, lowliness, and labor, because if they were rich, they would never go to Heaven, and even though they hear the voice of God inviting them to follow Him, they would refuse to do so, because, as Christ says in the parable of the sower: "They would be choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and would yield no fruit."[2] But, the wealthy will think, is it, then, such a dangerous thing to be rich? If so, God has not meant well with me in bestowing worldly goods upon me; it would have been better for me if He had not been so generous to me in that respect. No, you must not say that; you should rather thank the good God, in the most humble manner, for His merciful dealing with you. As I have hitherto spoken of different states of life, I will now consider your state, or rather, I will prove and maintain the beneficence and goodness of God towards you, and all who are present may learn something useful in this sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

God shows His good will to the rich by bestowing on them temporal goods and wealth; therefore they owe Him special gratitude and love. Such is the whole subject of to-day's sermon.

Help us all, O God, to love Thee and give Thee thanks; we ask of Thee light and grace to this end, through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

Christ says: woe to the rich.

"Woe to you that are rich!"[3] thus I hear Jesus Christ speak in a voice of thunder; and do I dare to maintain that God means well with the rich when He gives them many worldly goods? "Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of Heaven."[4] And I say in a tone of congratulation: Oh, how good God is to the rich, by bestowing wealth upon

[1] Erat enim habens multas possessiones.—Matth. xix. 22.
[2] Et a sollicitudinibus, et divitiis, et voluptatibus vitæ euntes suffocantur etc.—Luke viii. 14.
[3] Væ vobis divitibus.—Ibid. vi. 24.
[4] Amen dico vobis, quia dives difficile intrabit in regnum cœlorum.—Matth. xix. 23.

them! "And again I say to you," says Christ, "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven;"[1] and do I, a poor, ignorant mortal, dare to assure the rich of the favor and good will of the Almighty, precisely because He bestows riches on them? And why do I speak of those who actually possess worldly wealth? Even the very desire of it, as St. Paul writes to Timothy, is a snare of the devil: "They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil."[2] Nearly all the holy Fathers agree with the Apostle when they call riches an occasion of eternal ruin. St. Ambrose says that money is "a most crafty plotter against souls."[3] St. Isidore calls it "a great temptation,"[4] and yet, in the face of all this testimony, I come forward and say that the rich are happy; rejoice, I cry out to them, and return thanks most humbly to God, for the great benefit He has conferred on you in giving you much money and property! How can these two conflicting statements be reconciled? On the one side riches are called a temptation, a snare of the devil, an almost insuperable barrier to eternal happiness, and God threatens woe to the rich; on the other, they are called a special benefit and a convincing proof of the goodness of God.

Not because riches are by divine decree, or in themselves bad.

It is true, my dear brethren, that these two statements cannot be reconciled, if they are to be understood of every rich person in the world. I admit that superfluous wealth is for many, nay, for most men an occasion of temptation, of many sins and vices, of losing Heaven, and of eternal damnation; but whence comes that? Is it from the will and intention of God in bestowing temporal wealth? No; such a thought would be blasphemy. He has a far greater, higher, and happier end in view for those on whom He bestows riches, for He intends that they shall use His gifts to save their souls. It was for this reason that He gave great wealth to His faithful and loving servants, such as Job, the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Joseph, David, St. Edward, St. Louis, St. Gregory, and countless others, who were very rich. Whence comes the misery of the rich, then? Why should their wealth be the occasion of their eternal ruin? Perhaps there is something in the nature of riches to account for it.

[1] Iterum dico vobis, facilius est camelum per foramen acus transire, quam divitem intrare in regnum cœlorum.—Matth. xix. 24.

[2] Qui volunt divites fieri, incidunt in tentationem, et in laqueum diaboli. -I. Tim. vi. 9.

[3] Blandissimum animi insidiatorem.

[4] Grande patrimonium grandis tentatio est.

No; because riches are neither good nor bad in themselves, and they can be used for either good or evil, according to the intention of him who possesses them.

They can be used for good or evil, as their owner wishes. Shown by a simile.

Socrates, the philosopher, used to say that wealth is a source of good or of evil, according to the disposition of him into whose hands it comes. With a perverse and wicked man, who does not fear nor love God, it is like a drawn sword in the hands of a madman, who can use it only to injure himself and others; while with a virtuous man, who wishes to save his soul, it is like a sheathed sword at the side of a brave and faithful warrior, who knows how to use it at the proper time to defend his life, and to protect the honor of his sovereign. That we may understand this still more clearly, my dear brethren, just think of the different uses that can be made of a ladder. I can ascend or descend, according as I place my foot on it. The carpenter or mason uses it to climb to the summit of the roof of a house; the miner uses it to descend into the deepest abysses of the earth, and if he is not careful, he will fall and break his neck; but if he does so, it is his own fault, and not that of the ladder. It is the same with riches and worldly goods: worldly men who are content to grovel on the earth, use them as a ladder to descend into the pit of hell; while good Christians, whose hearts and desires are centred on high, use them as a means of ascending to Heaven and gaining eternal goods. Riches hurled into hell the rich man of the Gospel, who spent his life in all kinds of luxury, drunkenness, and gluttony. "The rich man died and was buried in hell."[1] While the faithful servants of God, who could say like Job: "I was an eye to the blind, and a foot to the lame; I was the father of the poor,"[2] made use of riches as a means of attaining greater holiness, and greater glory in Heaven.

So that it is only the bad use of wealth that brings woe.

Is it, then, the bad use alone of riches that causes the misery of men? Not a doubt of it, as St. Chrysostom remarks on the words of St. Paul to Timothy: "Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded,"[3] that is, not to think too much of themselves on account of their wealth, nor to look down upon others. St. Chrysostom asks: "Why did not Paul say: Charge them to become poor, charge them to give up their superfluous wealth, and not charge them not to be high-minded?"[4] "He knew that

[1] Mortuus est dives, et sepultus est in inferno.—Luke xvi. 22.

[2] Oculus fui cæco, et pes claudo. Pater eram pauperum.—Job xxix. 15, 16.

[3] Divitibus hujus sæculi præcipe, non sublime sapere.—I. Tim. vi. 17.

[4] Quare non dixit: præcipe depauperari, præcipe quæ habent exhaurire, sed præcipe, non sublime sapere?

not riches," is the answer, "but the bad use of them is forbidden; just as wine is not a bad thing, but drunkenness, so wealth is not bad, but avarice, and it is a bad thing to be high-minded;" it is a bad thing to be extravagant, etc. Remember the words of the Apostle that I have already quoted, my dear brethren: "They who will become rich, fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil."[2] He does not say, they who are rich, but they who wish to be rich, whose hearts and desires are centred on riches, so that they place their whole happiness in them, who are full of anxiety to amass wealth, and use all kinds of means to do so; who love to display their riches by ostentation, unnecessary pomp, useless pleasure, and a worthless and idle life, as is, alas! only too often the case. These fall into the temptations and snares of the devil, and it is of them that Jesus Christ speaks the dreadful words: "Woe to you that are rich"![3] How difficult, how impossible, almost, it is for you to escape hell and to gain Heaven!

Otherwise, riches are good for the welfare of the body.

Otherwise, he who uses riches to the end for which God has bestowed them on him, has nothing of this kind to fear, and they can bring him many advantages, both for soul and body. First, as to the body: who does not know that health is the greatest benefit that God can bestow on the body, for without it, nothing else can give either comfort or enjoyment? Now, it is clear that when riches are employed with due moderation, they are the best means of preserving health; for by their means, one can procure everything that is necessary or useful for the nourishment, clothing, care, delight, and comfort of the body. Ye poor and needy, ye fathers and mothers who suffer from want, of whom there are some in every town and village, how I pity your miserable and wretched condition! When I see many of you unable to work through weakness, and through want of nourishment, clothing, bedding, and proper shelter; when I behold you covered with rags and patches, sometimes half-naked, braving heat and cold, going from house to house, and getting often abuse instead of bread; when I think of others who are poor and at the same time grievously ill, without any one to attend on them, without a doctor, without medicines, abandoned by all, lying in some stable or some out-of-the-way corner of

[1] Novit non prohibitas esse divitias, sed qualis earum sit usus; sicut non mala res vinum, sed ebrietas, ita non mala res divitiæ, sed mala avaritia, malum alti sapere.

[2] Qui volunt divites fieri, incidunt in tentationem et in laqueum diaboli.

[3] Væ vobis divitibus.

a house, on a bundle of straw; when I think that there are many citizens and peasants who must toil from early morning till late at night, and withal can hardly earn bread enough to keep themselves from going to bed hungry; when I remember the many decent poor who are surrounded by a houseful of starving children for whom they cannot get anything to eat; oh, woe to you, I must think, if in those wretched circumstances you have not great patience, resignation, and fear and love of God; for how grievously you must be tempted to theft, robbery, blasphemous thoughts, despair, and many other sins!

Therefore, they are a great benefit.

Meanwhile, you wealthy Christians may learn from this how well God means towards you by allowing you to be born of rich parents, or at least by blessing your work and bestowing on you temporal goods, so that you can support yourselves comfortably. Tell me, why are you so much better off than those others? Why are you better clothed? Why have you not to suffer hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, misery and wretchedness like them? Oh, you think, we have money and a good income, so that we can support ourselves and those belonging to us, and avoid the evils you mention. Very good; but I ask you again, where does your money come from? Why have they received less and you more? They have hardly enough to support life, while you have more than you can use. Do you think, perhaps, that it comes from your own nature? But how could that be, for they have the same nature as you? Are they not reasoning human beings like you? Do they not come down from the same father, Adam, from whom you descend? Are they not created by the same God to His image and likeness, and redeemed by the Son of God? Do they not, as they are children of God and co-heirs with Jesus Christ, belong to the same Heaven, which you hope for? Why, then, are they in poverty and suffering, and you in wealth and comfort? You may think that your wealth is your own lawful property, which you have acquired by inheritance, or by your own labor; and that is true, nor can any one take away your property from you, without committing an injustice. But I ask you again: How is it that you are born of wealthy parents, and not those others, or that you have not become poor like them in course of time? Do you ascribe that to mere chance, or to your own industry? If so, you are the most ungrateful of men, for you do not acknowledge the true cause of your prosperity. Even the heathen philosopher Seneca says: "You are the most ungrateful of men,

because you say you have from nature what you owe to God alone."[1] No, you must learn that there is another and a greater Father, who distributes His goods amongst men in so many different ways; it is from God that prosperity and adversity, riches and poverty, comfort and misery, come. Hear what God Himself says by the Wise Sirach: "Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches are from God."[2] And now I ask you finally: What greater merit have you in the sight of God, than others have, on account of which He has allowed you to be born of wealthy parents, or has bestowed wealth on you afterwards? And what crime have those others committed, that by divine will they are born to poverty and misery? See, now, how you are bound with thankful and humble hearts to acknowledge the special goodness of God towards you, and conclude therefrom what a debt of love and gratitude you owe Him!

Riches help also to the good of the soul.

But this is only the least part of the divine beneficence. It certainly would be a poor favor that would merely confer on me the comforts of life, while it places my soul in the greatest danger of eternal misery. No, my dear brethren, such is not the intention of the Almighty God; the salvation of the soul is the first thing that the heavenly Father seeks, even when He distributes temporal wealth and worldly goods in abundance. And indeed, if we think over the matter, we shall find that riches well used can do a great deal for the salvation of the soul.

The rich have more time for practising piety.

For, in the first place, you must admit, wealthy Christians, that since you have not to work hard, you have all the more time and convenient opportunity to devote to spiritual matters, to the service of God, and to all kinds of piety, than if you had to earn your daily bread by hard labor. What do you think of this, poor citizens, workmen, servants, and laborers? How glad would you not be if you could often visit the Church, hear holy Mass, and the Word of God in sermons, often receive the Sacraments, and be present at public prayers and devotions! How gladly would you not occupy yourselves with reading spiritual books and the Lives of the Saints, with visiting and consoling the sick, with helping the poor and abandoned, and with similar works of Christian mercy and charity, in order to advance daily in the love and service of God, to gain merit for your souls, and to increase your glory in Heaven! How willingly, I say, would you not do all these things, if you only had the necessary time

[1] Nihil agis mortalium ingratissime, qui negas, Deo debere, sed naturæ.

[2] Bona et mala, vita et mors, paupertas et honestas a Deo sunt.—Eccl. xi. 14.

and opportunity, and if you were not obliged to work hard and constantly, in order to support yourselves and those who depend on you! And that, too, is no doubt the reason why you often envy the rich, and complain that you can hardly find time to hear Mass in the morning. But be comforted; for if you are of good will, and keep in the friendship of God, then you may be satisfied and contented with the most just and wise decrees by which He has called you to that state, and you can offer your daily labor to Him. Offer to Him, also, your wants and necessities, by frequently renewing your good intention for His honor and glory, and you will serve God in the very manner in which He most wishes you to serve Him, as I shall show hereafter. Meanwhile, what I have said to you, rich people, still remains true: You have more frequent, better, and more convenient opportunities than others to enrich your souls with graces and merits by the works of devotion already mentioned, and by frequenting the sacraments; and therefore you are again forced to the conclusion that you owe to God a far more zealous service, love, and gratitude.

They can free themselves from all anxiety of soul.

In the second place, your wealth gives you a certain and powerful means, if you wish to use it properly, of freeing yourselves from all anxieties and troubles of soul. The things that are most apt to disturb and frighten us, and that really drive many to despair, are the mortal sins of our past lives, of the forgiveness of which we are not certain, and for which, although their guilt may be remitted, we may still have to suffer severe punishment; the uncertainty and terror of the moment of death, for we do not know whether it will be a happy or a miserable one for us; the strict and inscrutable judgment of God, which will exact an account of every idle word and thought, nor can we have any idea of how that judgment will turn out for us; the eternal pains of hell, that most of us know in our hearts and souls we have deserved by mortal sin; the eternal joys of Heaven, of which we are not by any means certain, and which most of us have great reason to doubt of attaining. These are the things, I repeat, which can fill most souls with fear and anxiety, when they consider them. But you, oh, rich and wealthy, if you only earnestly desire it, can easily get rid of all these troubles by making a good use of your wealth. How so? Is it possible to appease an offended God, who has all imaginable riches in His possession, and who is not in want of any creature? Is it possible to appease death, which has no respect for persons, and

makes no difference between a king and a beggar? or that inflexible Judge who will pronounce sentence on all men, according to their works, without regarding their persons? Is it possible to close the gates of hell, that are always yawning wide to receive sinners? or to open the gates of heaven that will not admit anything defiled? Can all this be done, I say, by money, and can the faults of the past be repaired by it? Yes, as the proverb truly says: "Money can do everything."[1]

That comes from the remembrance of past sins.

For, is there any one of you who is troubled by his past sins, and by the remembrance of the manifold debts he has contracted with the divine justice, which he cannot pay? Let him follow the beautiful advice that the Prophet Daniel gave to King Nabuchodonosor, after he had predicted, in the name of God, the terrible punishment that was in store for him, that he would be deprived of his kingdom and condemned to eat grass like a wild beast; he said: "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee, and redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor."[2] You see now what a powerful and easy means God has given you, in preference to others, to atone fully for all the punishment due to your past sins; to atone fully, I say, no matter how numerous your sins may have been; for, "alms-deeds are works of charity," says St. Leo, "and we know, from St. Peter, that charity covereth a multitude of sins."[3] Nay, if you are even now in the unhappy state of sin, you can use the same means to receive the grace of repentance and pardon from God. "Those unhappy men," says St. Maximus, "who are dead by sin, can come to life by alms-deeds; and for those to whom avarice was a cause of death, charity becomes a source of life, if they extinguish the flames they kindled by their sins and purchase innocence for themselves, as they before purchased guilt."[4]

From the fear of death.

If you are terrified and afraid at the thought of death, you can easily console yourselves; you have only to open your coffers, and you will find therein a powerful medicine against an unhappy death, one far more powerful than any doctor in the world could

[1] Pecuniæ obediunt omnia.

[2] Quamobrem, rex, consilium meum placeat tibi, et peccata tua eleemosynis redime, et iniquitates tuas misericordias pauperum.—Dan. iv. 24.

[3] Eleemosynæ sunt opera charitatis, et scimus, quia charitas operit multitudinem peccatorum.

[4] Miseri homines, qui in mortem peccatis aruerant, ad vitam eleemosynis reviviscunt. Estque illis misericordia fons salutis, quibus avaritia fuerat mortis incendium, ut flammas, quas sibi peccando incenderant, largiendo restinguant, et emant sibi quodammodo innocentiam, qui sibi emerant aliquando peccatum.

give you. The day of death is called, in the Sacred Scriptures, an evil day,[1] a day full of anguish and dread. Now hear the Holy Ghost Himself telling you how you may free yourselves from this evil day, by making a good use of your wealth, that is, by sharing it with the poor and needy; He says by the Prophet David: "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor."[2] Why blessed? "The Lord will deliver him in the evil day."[3] He need not even fear that day, as St. Peter Chrysologus says: "He need not fear the evil day, who makes good days for the poor."[4] St. Gregory Turonensis tells a story of a citizen of Antioch, who was very generous to the poor; he had the pious custom of never sitting down to table without having a poor man as his guest. He once went through the whole town looking for a poor man to sit at table with him, and because he could not find any one, he went outside the gates, where he found a man dressed in white, accompanied by two others. He asked them if they were strangers and begged of them, if such was the case, to come and eat with him; whereupon the oldest of these said: Can you not by your prayers save this whole town from destruction? Saying these words, he unfolded his handkerchief and shook it in the direction of the city. Immediately a great noise was heard, and half the city tumbled down and buried numbers of people under the ruins. The citizen was so terrified that he fell half fainting to the ground, but the stranger raised him up, and said to him: Fear not and return home; you will find your wife and children and your whole family in good health, not one of them has perished: "Your constant prayers and the alms you give every day to the poor have saved you and yours."[5] The three men then disappeared from his sight. On his return he found half the city turned into a heap of stones, and nearly all the people who inhabited it crushed to death, while his house and all its inmates were, as the angel said, quite unhurt. So true is it: He will not see an evil day who has made good days for the poor.

From the strict judgment.

Alms-giving and generosity to the poor will also free you from the fear caused by the thought of judgment; although the Judge is inexorable after this life, and deals with the soul in strict justice, yet He allows Himself to be bribed and appeased with money

[1] Dies mala. [2] Beatus, qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.—Ps. xl. 2.
[3] In die mala liberabit eum Dominus.—Ibid.
[4] Non videbit diem malum, qui dies bonos habere fecit pauperem.
[5] Oratio assidua et eleemosynæ, quas quotidie in pauperes distribuas, te tuosque servarunt.

beforehand, as St. John Chrysostom assures us: "Give to the poor," are his words, "and you will appease your Judge."[1] Appease Him? Nay, you will gain something for yourself in judgment, as St. Peter Chrysologus says, inasmuch as you can thus make your Judge your Debtor: "Give bread, give drink, give clothing, if you wish God to be your Debtor, not your Judge."[2] "Alms shall be a good confidence before the most high God, to all them that give it."[3]

From the eternal pains of hell.

Finally, the most terrible thing of all, that we have most to fear, and on account of which alone all the other things are to be dreaded, is the eternal fire of hell, the dwelling-place of all possible torments. Now, you rich people can, if you wish, engage a sentinel, who will stand at the gates of hell and keep them shut fast so that you cannot enter. "Mercy stands at the gate of hell, and does not allow any merciful man to be cast into that prison."[4] Such is the opinion of St. Augustine, based on the words that Jesus Christ will say on the last day: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you:"[5] "For I was hungry and you gave Me to eat,"[6] and partly, too, on those words of Tobias to his son: "Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness."[7] Drexelius says: "O desirable change! Formerly a cherub stood at the entrance of Paradise with a flaming sword in his hand. Now mercy watches at the gate of hell, and allows none of its own to enter!"[8] Therefore, in your temporal goods you have a powerful means of protecting yourselves against the greatest anxieties and evils of the soul.

And can gain the highest good in Heaven.

Now that this fear is removed, what remains for you but the joys of Heaven? And these, too, you can purchase with your money. Hear what St. John Chrysostom says: "We can purchase Heaven; give bread to the poor, and you will gain Paradise."[9] I need not say much about this, my dear brethren, because I

[1] Da pauperi, et judicem mitigabis.

[2] Da panem, da potum, da vestimentum; si Deum debitorem, non judicem vis.

[3] Fiducia magna erit coram summo Deo eleemosyna omnibus facientibus eam.—Tob. iv. 12.

[4] Ante fores gehennæ stat misericordia, nullum misericordem permittit in carcerem illum mitti.

[5] Venite, benedicti Patris mei, possidete paratum vobis regnum.—Matth. xxv. 34,

[6] Esurivi enim et dedistis mihi manducare.—Ibid. 35.

[7] Eleemosyna ab omni peccato, et a morte liberat, et non patietur animam ire in tenebras. —Tob. iv. 11.

[8] O bene mutatas vices! Olim paradisi aditum princeps cherubicus romphea flammea interclusit: nunc ad inferorum portas excubat misericordia, et neminem suorum ingredi sinit.

[9] Mercatura est cœlum: da panem, et accipe paradisum.

have already spoken of it in another sermon, and shown how we can gain Heaven by alms-deeds. What a great happiness it is for you who are wealthy, to be able to obtain such immense riches at so little cost! St. Peter Chrysologus says: "Give, oh, man, a piece of ground to the poor, and you will receive Heaven; give a little money, and you will gain a kingdom."[1] And indeed, if you consider the matter attentively, you must admit that the temporal wealth with which God has blessed you should serve to raise up your hearts to heavenly things, and to encourage you to seek and to gain them, not only by alms-deeds, but also by many other good works. For, if the God of mercy gives His servants, in this miserable life, such treasures and comforts, what will He not bestow on them in their true country, in His own eternal kingdom, in the true home of all imaginable happiness, where they will always remain faithful to Him? If even the servants and attendants in a royal palace are clad in rich garments, and feast sumptuously every day, how costly and sumptuously must not the ministers and councillors of the king live, since they are in communication with their royal master? Now, during this life we are, so to speak, only servants and lackeys of the great King of Heaven, who has sent us here to labor, and if our Master provides for us so richly now, what will He not do for us after this life, when we shall become His intimate friends, and when, according to His promises, we shall reign with Him forever? Therefore, I will serve that good and beneficent Lord during my life, with the greatest care and zeal, that I may be certain of possessing the kingdom of Heaven with Him hereafter.

Therefore, God means well with the rich, and they are bound to love and serve Him especially.

Does not all this prove to you, oh, wealthy Christians, how good and how kind God is to you, and how well He looks after both your spiritual and temporal interests, since He has given you such a large share of the good things of this life? Is it not, then, your bounden duty to be especially grateful to so good a God, and to be specially zealous in His service? Have you been so always? If not, you must acknowledge your base and black ingratitude towards such a good and generous God, and I will call your attention to that on a future occasion. But now say with thankful hearts in the words of the Psalmist: What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?"[2] Ah, my good God, what shall I give Thee for all that Thou hast bestowed on me in preference to so many thou-

[1] Da pauperi terram, ut accipias cœlum; da numinum, ut accipias regnum.

[2] Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus, quæ tribuit mihi?—Ps. cxv. 3.

sand others? I fully admit that the goods Thou hast bestowed on me, although they are transitory, come from Thy special bounty towards me. What a beautiful opportunity Thou hast given me of working out my salvation! Thou hast freed me from the miseries of poverty and labor, that I might have more time to serve Thee and to devote to piety. That I have more than others, is due to Thee; my prosperity is Thy work alone, and Thou hast blessed me with it, that I may help the poor and needy, and feed, clothe, and care for them, and thus atone for my past sins, secure to myself the grace of a happy death, escape the rigor of Thy justice and the flames of hell, and gain eternal happiness! Oh, what do I not owe Thee, my God! Unceasing gratitude, praise, and honor be to Thy mercy! Pardon me my past ingratitude in having so often offended Thee whom I should love more than others! Henceforward, I will use my wealth to the end for which Thou hast given it to me, that is, to serve Thee with zeal, to help Thee in the persons of Thy poor servants, and to purchase the eternal goods Thou hast promised in the kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

FIFTY-NINTH SERMON.

ON THE INGRATITUDE OF THE RICH TOWARDS GOD.

Subject.

Vile ingratitude of the rich and wealthy towards God, when they do not serve Him faithfully.—*Preached on the first Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Hæc omnia tibi dabo, si cadens adoraveris me.—Matth. iv. 9.

"All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me."

Introduction.

What the devil could not effect with the Incarnate God, he succeeds in doing with countless men of the world. He said to Christ, when he showed Him all the riches of the world, from

the top of a high mountain: "All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me."[1] Oh, the wicked spirit need not offer all that to many men! He has only to say to them: I will give you a dollar, or a few cents, if you bend the knee before me, and his offer will be accepted at once, and they will be prepared to violate the law of God by mortal sin, and to bow down in homage to the devil. Oh, my Lord and my God, how can that be? Thou offerest to all men an infinitely greater good; Thou dost not show us this miserable earth, but Thy glorious Heaven, with all its treasures and happiness! Thou sayest to each one of us: Behold, I will give thee all these things[2] for eternity, if thou wilt adore and serve Me faithfully. But how few there are who serve Thee for the great reward Thou hast promised! No; they do not care for heavenly goods. But promise them earthly things. Say to them, I will give you this fine property, and many treasures and great riches, if you will serve Me, and Thou wilt find many who will respond to Thy call. But what am I saying? The devil can find adorers enough for such things. But Thou, oh, my God, canst secure only a small number of faithful servants by the same means! And is it not true? How many rich and wealthy people there are in the world to whom Thou hast not only promised worldly riches, but hast really given them most generously! And yet, do not the most of them forget Thee and Thy service on account of their wealth? What black ingratitude that is! I have already shown, my dear brethren, how well God means with the rich, by bestowing temporal wealth on them, and how they ought, therefore, to serve Him with special zeal. Now I say, on the other hand—

Plan of Discourse.

Vile is the ingratitude of the rich and wealthy towards God, when they do not serve Him faithfully! Such is the whole subject. Constant zeal in the love and service of God should be the fruit of this sermon.

Help us thereto, oh, most generous God, by Thy light and grace, which we ask of Thee through the intercession of Mary, and the holy angels guardian.

The greater and more numerous the benefits that one receives, the more gratitude, love, and service he is bound to show his benefactor. Consequently, he is guilty of vile ingratitude, if

The rich have received more from God

[1] Hæc omnia tibi dabo, si cadens adoraveris me. [2] Hæc omnia tibi dabo.

than many others.

he does not acknowledge those benefits, nor show special love and service to him from whom he has received them. But how great would be his guilt, if in addition to being ungrateful, he were to take occasion, from those very benefits, to turn against his benefactor, to ill-treat, offend, and offer him every kind of insult and annoyance! That is an ingratitude that even unreasoning animals would be ashamed of. See, wealthy Christians, so basely do you act towards God, when you do not serve and love Him faithfully! You cannot deny that you have received more numerous and greater benefits from His well-meaning generosity towards you, than many thousand others. If you refused to admit that, your ingratitude would be great indeed. For, besides the benefits you enjoy in common with all Christians, such as creation to the image of God, redemption from eternal death by the Passion of Christ, cleansing from original sin in baptism, and the sanctification of the soul by the Blood of Jesus Christ, preservation up to the present moment, and vocation to the one true faith,—besides all these, you have been provided with temporal goods, so that you lead a much more quiet, comfortable, and pleasant life, than many others, and also gain great merit in Heaven, while there are many who have hardly anything, and who suffer hunger, want, and poverty, or who must employ their miserable lives in constant toil and labor.

Therefore, it is very wicked of them to be unfaithful to God.

Is it not just, therefore, that you should be more zealous than others, in loving and serving that God who has been so much more generous to you? The Prophet David does not seem even to imagine it possible that a reasoning being could act otherwise; for he says: "Glory and wealth shall be in his house; and his justice remaineth forever and ever."[1] Even the devil is not surprised at seeing a rich man fearing and loving God; for when God spoke to him of His servant Job in these words: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a simple and upright man, one that feareth God, and avoideth evil?"[2] Yes, answered the demon, but that is not to be wondered at; remember the care Thou hast of him! "Doth Job fear God in vain? Hast Thou not made a fence for him and his house, and all his substance round about, and blessed the works of his hands, and his possession hath increased

[1] Gloria et divitiæ in domo ejus: justitia ejus manet in sæculum sæculi.—Ps. cxi. 3.

[2] Numquid considerasti servum meum Job, quod non sit ei similis in terra, homo simplex et rectus, ac timens Deum, et recedens a malo?—Job i. 8.

on the earth?"[1] Is it, then, a great wonder that he is pious? Is he not compelled to fear, love, and honor Thee? Thus spoke the evil spirit. Learn therefrom, ye wealthy, how inconsistently, how wickedly you act towards your good God when you do not love and fear Him in a special manner.

Still more wicked when they use the gifts of God to offend Him.

But what are we to think of your conduct when, instead of thanking, loving, and fearing God, you misuse the riches and the gifts He has bestowed on you, to forget, despise, and offend Him? We could hardly imagine any one acting thus towards another man from whom he has received benefits. Joseph in Egypt considered it an impossibility. You all know, my dear brethren, as we read in the 39th chapter of Genesis, how Joseph was tempted by the wife of Putiphar his master, whose house he had charge of. How did he act in that temptation? There was one reason that he put forward for not complying with the desires of his wicked mistress; he said with astonishment: "Behold, my master hath delivered all things to me, and knoweth not what he hath in his own house; neither is there anything which is not in my power, or that he hath not delivered to me, but thee who art his wife; how then can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?"[2] Mark these wise words, my dear brethren: My master has given all things into my hands, how is it possible for me to offer him this injury? Where would my gratitude and fidelity be? Would I not be the most base and ungrateful of men, if I were to repay the trust he reposes in me, by committing such a sin? "How can I?"[3] No, I cannot, and will not be so base! In the same way should every rich and wealthy man act in the occasions or temptations to sin. No; he should think, how can I do that and be unfaithful to my God? Behold, the good God has meant so well with me; He has given me so many goods and possessions, that I may live comfortably and at my ease;[4] how, then, can I be so shameless as to do this evil thing, and to sin against God[5] who has been so good to me? It is a crime that I could not answer for before God nor man. If the Supreme Lord had made me like

[1] Numquid Job frustra timet Deum? Nonne tu vallasti eum, ac domum ejus, universamque substantiam per circuitum; operibus manuum ejus benedixisti, et possessio ejus crevit in terra?—Job. i. 9, 10.

[2] Ecce dominus meus omnibus mihi traditis ignorat quid habeat in domo sua, nec quidquam est, quod non in mea sit potestate, vel non tradiderit mihi præter te quæ uxor ejus es: quomodo ergo possum hoc malum facere et peccare in Dominum meum?—Gen. xxxix. 8, 9.

Quomodo possum? [4] Ecce dominus meus omnibus mihi traditis, etc.

[5] Quomodo ergo possum hoc malum facere et peccare in Dominum meum?

so many others, so that I should have to earn a scanty living, by the sweat of my brow; if He had given me nothing in this world but the beggar's staff, so that I should be obliged to beg my bread from door to door; even then I would be bound to fear and love God, and would deserve the eternal flames of hell if I offended Him by mortal sin; how much more ought I not to fear and love Him now that He has given me so many comforts, and bestowed so many blessings on me? How, then, can I dare to commit sin and to act with such vile ingratitude towards such a generous Benefactor?[1] No, my God; I would rather give up all that I possess, than offend Thee by one sin. Such, I repeat, should be the dispositions of all men, but especially of the rich and wealthy.

Most people are not like this.

But alas, oh, God of love, how is it in reality with, I will not say the majority, but as Thou knowest, very many, at least, in this respect? Thou hast ere now boasted to Satan of the virtue of Thy servant Job, whom Thou hast blessed with great riches, and whom Thou hast called "a simple and upright man, one that feareth God, and avoideth evil;"[2] and Thou hast said that the like of him was not to be found on earth. "Hast thou considered my servant Job?"[3] If Thou hadst now to ask the same Satan what he thinks of many Christians, could he not say to Thee: Seest Thou not that rich man, that rich lady, that wealthy merchant or citizen? "Thou hast made a fence for him, and his house, and all his substance round about; Thou hast blessed the works of his hands and his possession hath increased upon the earth;"[4] Thou hast filled his storehouses with corn, his cellars with wine, his coffers with gold; and how does he love and thank Thee for having done so? See how he lives. He is proud and unjust, and fears neither God nor man; he abstains from good works, but not from evil; he serves me faithfully, although I have not given him a single penny; how little honor Thou derivest from Thy generosity to him! Thou hast certainly no reason to boast of him, but rather to complain of him as Thou didst formerly of Thy ungrateful people the Hebrews: "The beloved," he to whom I have been so generous, "grew fat and kicked," like a well-fed horse that kicks at its master,

[1] Quomodo ergo possum hoc malum facer t peccare in Dominum meum?
[2] Homo simplex et rectus, ac timens Deum, et recedens a malo.
[3] Numquid considerasti servum meum Job?
[4] Tu vallasti eum ac domum ejus, universamque substantiam per circuitum; operibus manuum ejus benedixisti, et possessio ejus crevit in terra.

"he grew fat, and thick, and gross," and therefore he has abandoned God, to whom he owes everything.[1]

Who do not look upon riches as a divine benefit.

And is it not all true, my dear brethren? What kind of thanks and love does the Almighty God receive from those wealthy people, who do not even acknowledge that their riches are a gift and a benefit from Him, but ascribe them, either to their parents, from whom they have inherited them, or to their own cleverness, talents, energy, skill, and industry, or even to what they consider as blind chance and good luck, that have hitherto accompanied their labors? Such people never think that it is to the divine generosity that they owe their prosperity, nor do they ever thank God for His goodness to them. They are like fattened swine that gorge on acorns the whole day, and never look up to the tree that supplies them with their favorite food.

Who are lazy in the service of God, and attend only to the body.

In making them rich, God has given them more convenient opportunities, more time and leisure to attend to their souls, to practise good works, and to gain great merit for themselves in His sight, as we have seen in the last sermon. But they think very little of that! The rich man mentioned in the Gospel of St. Luke, when he had filled his barns and provided himself with everything for many years to come, thought of nothing but enjoying himself; he said exultingly: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer."[2] This is only a parable, my dear brethren, but it is evidently literally true of many wealthy Christians nowadays, who, instead of thinking of their salvation, and spending the most of their time in the service of God, waste their precious time in idleness, sleeping, dressing, eating, and drinking, and giving useless entertainments for no other purpose than to enjoy themselves here below.

They have less piety and love of God than the poor.

When poor workmen and citizens rise early in the morning to offer the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ to His Eternal Father in the holy Mass, the rich are lying in their comfortable beds until late in the day. *Their* morning prayer is drinking tea and coffee; *they* cannot hear Mass on week-days because they take too long a time to dress. The poor can often spare an hour from their necessary labor to assist at public devotions, while the rich cannot spare a moment from their parties and amusements to think of God and Heaven. The former often read spiritual

[1] Incrassatus est dilectus, et recalcitravit: incrassatus, impinguatus, dilatatus, dereliquit Deum factorem suum.—Deut. xxxii. 15.

[2] Anima, habes multa bona posita in annos plurimos: requiesce, comede, bibe, epulare.—Luke xii. 19.

books and the Lives of the Saints on Sundays and holy-days, while the latter spend their time in playing cards and amusing themselves. The poor often find time to visit and console the sick and afflicted; but who would dare to suggest such a disagreeable work of charity to many a rich gentleman or lady? They must pay and receive visits of ceremony. The poor, although they have not always the best of food on their frugal tables, would yet feel anxious and uneasy in conscience if they ate meat during Lent, even when a general dispensation is given; the rich, although they feast sumptuously every day, cannot mortify themselves for the good of their souls and for the sake of their suffering Redeemer, so far as to observe the forty days' fast according to the law of the Church, even when no dispensation is given, and they are clever enough in finding out excuses and reasons for asking to be specially dispensed from such a severe law. While the poor, ill-protected as they are against the cold, are regular in their attendance at sermons, even in mid-winter, because they sincerely wish to receive some encouragement in the divine service, the majority of the rich are hardly ever seen at a sermon, as if the grace of God were not necessary for them; and if they come now and then, it is with them as Christ says in the Parable of the Sower: "They hear the word, and are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit."[1] Cardinal Bellarmine compares the poor to dry, and the rich to green wood, and says that the Word of God in sermons is the fire of which Christ speaks in the Gospel of St. Luke: "I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?"[2] Now dry wood will take fire immediately, while green wood smokes a long time before it gets alight. In the same way, the poor are readily inclined to profit by sermons, but the majority of rich people are not easy to be persuaded of the truth, because they are full of the moisture of bad humors. The former, after having often renewed their good intention and thus worked for God the whole day, are generally amongst the number of those good Christians who every evening, before they retire to rest, say their evening prayers and make the examen of conscience on their knees with their families, although they are worn out by fatigue, and every fortnight, or at least every month, they go to confession and communion. But the latter think it a great thing if they fold their hands to say an Our Father before

[1] Et a sollicitudinibus et divitiis et voluptatibus vitæ euntes suffocantur.—Luke viii. 14.
[2] Ignem veni mittere in terram: et quid volo, nisi ut accendatur? Ibid. xii. 49.

and after meals, and to approach the sacraments four times a year; otherwise, they hardly think of God during the day; where their treasure is, there are their hearts also; so that a certain painter who once made a picture representing the prayer of the rich and that of the poor, was not far wrong in his idea. He represented the rich man as sending forth from his heart many rays of light, one of which was directed to his money, another to his farm, a third to his cellar, a fourth to his barn, a fifth to his family, etc., but not one was directed to God; the poor man, on the contrary, had a single ray proceeding from his heart, which went straight to Christ crucified. In a word, the majority of the rich seldom have that tender devotion and zealous love in the service of God that are seen in ordinary citizens and work-people.

Who daily add sin to sin.

In making them wealthy God has given the rich the best means of atoning for their past sins by generosity towards the poor and needy, and also of meriting even the grace of sincere repentance and pardon: but many of them increase the number of their sins day by day, by using the gifts of God to satisfy their pride and contempt for others, their vanity and extravagance in dress, their avarice and injustice, their usury and oppression of the poor, their gluttony and drunkenness, their impurity and lust. Instead of saying with Joseph: My Lord and my God has endowed me with great wealth, and enabled me to live in comfort; how can I commit sin and offend Him?[1] they invert the sentence, so to speak, and say by their acts: My Lord and my God has given me much more than He has given to thousands of others; how then can I[2] live according to the laws of the Gospel like poor people? My Lord and my God has given me a certain and rich income, how then can I be humble, modest, temperate, sober, and chaste? How can I fast and deny myself creature comforts? How can I allow the insult offered me by my enemy to go unavenged? Why should I fear to spend my money? And thus they either incur much unnecessary expense by their luxury, extravagance, and pride, so that they have nothing left to atone for their sin by helping the poor and needy, or else they are so avaricious and hard-hearted that they have no pity for the poor. There are few ordinary citizens who will turn a poor beggar away from their doors empty-handed, or who will not at least have a good word for him,

[1] Quomodo possum hoc malum facere, et peccare in Dominum meum?
[2] Quomodo ergo possum?

while he may knock at the doors of ten wealthy people, one after the other, without getting anything; nay, he will often be sent away with harsh words. This is the gratitude shown to Thee, oh, God, by those whom Thou hast chosen as special objects of Thy generosity! What dost Thou think of such vileness and baseness? I know what Thou thinkest of it, for Thou tellest me by the Prophet Zacharias: "I am angry with a great anger with the wealthy nations,"[1] who misuse my benefits to offend Me; and the anger that I feel is not an ordinary one, but is exceeding great.

They thus prepare for themselves a terrible death.

I conceal this anger for the present, and allow them to go on as they please, and to enjoy my gifts and benefits; but woe to them hereafter! They will feel it in the hour of death, when they must leave the world behind them; thy will feel it after death, when they shall appear before my judgment seat; they will feel it for all eternity in the flames of hell! Hear this, and tremble with fear, ye wealthy people who do not serve God faithfully! As I have said before, you can use your riches to save yourselves from the evil day, and to prepare yourselves for a happy death: but instead of that, you are preparing for yourselves a death full of terror, bitterness, and anguish, and it will be with you as it was with the rich man in the Gospel, who thought only of eating, drinking, and enjoying himself: "Fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"[2] What use have you made of the benefits that God has bestowed on you? To you may be applied the words that the Lord spoke to His people by the Prophet Joel: "Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Did this ever happen in your days, or in the days of your fathers? Tell ye of this to your children, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation."[3] Now, it must be something of great importance that God wished to be thus handed down to future generations. And what was it: "That which the palmer-worm hath left, the locust hath eaten; and that which the locust hath left, the bruchus hath eaten; and that which the bruchus hath left, the mildew hath destroyed."[4] And He adds immediately after:

[1] Ira magna ego irascor super gentes opulentas.—Zach. i. 15.

[2] Stulte, hac nocte repetent animam tuam a te, et quæ parasti, cujus erunt?—Luke xii 20.

[3] Audite hoc, senes, et auribus percipite omnes habitatores terræ, si factum est istud in diebus vestris, aut in diebus patrum vestrorum? Super hoc etc.—Joel i. 2, 3.

[4] Residuum erucæ comedit locusta, et residuum locustæ comedit bruchus, et residuum bruchi comedit rubigo.—Ibid. 4, 5.

"Awake, ye that are drunk;"[1] as if He meant, he who does not understand this, must be drunk or foolish. We shall pass over the literal meaning of these words, my dear brethren, and explain their mystic sense. What happens in tilled lands when the crops are eaten up by all kinds of insects, can also be affirmed of the possessions of wealthy people who do not employ their riches for the service of God, and the salvation of their souls; for what is left over by gluttony and drunkenness, is generally consumed by idleness and folly; what idleness leaves intact is devoured by extravagance in dress; what this latter does not consume, is swallowed up by a host of servants and hangers-on; in a word, the corrupt world, vanity, sin, and vice, make away with all the wealth, so that the soul, and God and Christ in His poor receive no part of it. "Fool," so will it be with you when the decree is pronounced, "this night do they require thy soul of thee."[2] What is become of your wealth and money? You have nothing left for eternity; go away, then, naked and poor as you are!

An inexorable Judge.

Whither? Before the judgment seat of Him who gave you your riches, and who so often, in the person of His poor, stretched out His hand to you in vain for alms. You could appease this divine Judge, and dispose Him to be favorable to you, if you were generous towards the poor; but you continue to be slothful in the service of God, to lead sinful lives, to be hard and unmerciful to the poor, and thus to embitter your Judge against you more and more every day. Woe to you! Your sentence is already pronounced: "Depart from me, you cursed . . . . . For I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink. . . . . I was naked, and you have not clothed me; I was in prison, and you did not visit me: . . . . . depart from me, ye cursed!"[3]

Heaven closed against them.

Whither? I ask again. Ah, if you used your worldly wealth to the end for which God bestowed it on you, you might, by giving alms generously, make friends for yourselves among the poor, who would hereafter receive you into eternal tabernacles, according to the words of Christ: "Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings."[4] You, on the contrary, make for yourselves enemies who will one day cry out against you, and

[1] Expergiscimini ebrii.—Joel i. 5. [2] Hac nocte repetent animam tuam a te.

[3] Discedite a me maledicti! . . . . Esurivi enim, et non dedistis mihi manducare; sitivi. . . nudus fui. . . . in carcere fui. . . . Ite, maledicti! Matth. xxv. 41–43.

[4] Facite vobis amicos de mammona iniquitatis, ut, cum defeceritis, recipiant vos in æterna tabernacula.—Luke xvi. 9.

when the gate of Heaven is shut upon you, will say with your Judge: "Depart, ye cursed!"[1]

Deeper damnation.

Whither? I ask for the last time. "Into everlasting fire,"[2] which, instead of being extinguished for you by your alms-deeds, is made hotter for you by your pride, avarice, and hard-heartedness; and there you will find your eternal dwelling with the rich glutton, of whom the Gospel says: "And the rich man died, and he was buried in hell."[3]

Conclusion and exhortation to the wealthy.

Merciful God, have pity upon us! Things have not yet gone so far with us! Thou hast ere now sent Thy Prophet Nathan to King David, who had offended Thee and acted most ungratefully to Thee, and Thou hast commanded him to speak these impressive words: "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee from the hand of Saul, and gave thee thy master's house." Ungrateful man, what hast thou done? "And if these things be little I shall add far greater things unto thee. Why, therefore, hast thou despised the word of the Lord, to do evil in my sight?"[4] These words made such an impression on the heart of David, that he cried out, full of repentance for his ingratitude: Alas, what have I done! "I have sinned against the Lord."[5] Merciful God, I beg of Thee to speak now with Thy powerful grace to the hearts of the rich! Reprove them in the same manner: "Thus saith the Lord:" Ungrateful man, "I have anointed thee"[6] and blessed thee! I have given thee the magnificent house in which thou dwellest, and the other houses from which thou derivest thy income; I have given thee money in thy coffers, crops in thy lands, wine in thy vineyards, and all that thou hast is a gift that I have bestowed on thee in preference to so many thousand other men, who must labor hard to earn their daily bread; and if this is not enough, I will give thee still more, for my eternal kingdom of Heaven is prepared for thee, if thou wilt serve Me faithfully. "Why, therefore, hast thou despised the word of the Lord, to do evil in my sight?" Why hast thou dealt so meanly with Me, and trampled my law under foot? I expect-

[1] Ite, maledicti! [2] In ignem æternum.

[3] Mortuus est dives, et sepultus est in inferno.—Luke xvi. 22.

[4] Hæc dicit Dominus Deus Israel: Ego unxi te in regem super Israel, et ego erui te de manu Saul, et dedi tibi domum domini tui, . . . dedique tibi domum Israel et Juda, et si parva sunt ista, adjiciam tibi multo majora. Quare ergo contempsisti verbum Domini, ut faceres malum in conspectu meo?—II. Kings xii. 7, 8, 9.

[5] Peccavi Domino.—Ibid. 13.

[6] Hæc dicit Dominus Deus: Ego unxi te etc.

ed that thou wouldst serve and love Me all the more zealously, but in spite of my benefits, thou hast shamefully forgotten Me, since thou hast not hesitated to offend Me on account of them.

Christians, who know you are guilty in this respect, hear, not the voice of a Prophet Nathan, but that of your merciful God. Have you any love of honor and honesty? Then what else can you do but imitate the penitent David, and say: Alas, I confess it, "I have sinned against the Lord."[1] I have done wrong, and I must acknowledge my vileness and baseness in ill-using the benefits that have been bestowed on me, and in offending and insulting Thee, my God! But, praise and thanks be to Thy infinite mercy, that Thou hast given me the grace to see my ingratitude, so that, although I am as guilty as the rich man in the Gospel, yet I may escape the punishment he now suffers. I have sinned most shamefully against Thee, my sovereign benefactor; it is only too true that I have made a very bad use of Thy gifts! But Thou seest my heart, and Thou knowest that I repent sincerely of my past wickedness, and from this moment I firmly resolve to lead a different life, to serve and love Thee more faithfully and zealously, to be more diligent in the practice of devotion, to share with Thee, in the persons of Thy poor, the goods Thou hast bestowed upon me, and thus to atone for my past ingratitude, and to merit the grace of a happy death, a favorable judgment, and the eternal joys of Heaven. Amen.

Repentance and resolution of amendment.

Another Introduction for the Feast of St. Stephen, Proto-Martyr:

Text.

Ecce, relinquetur vobis domus vestra deserta.—Matth. xxiii. 38. "Behold, your house shall be left to you desolate."

Whom does Christ thus threaten? The inhabitants of the great city of Jerusalem, and as we see from the Gospel, He speaks in particular to the chief priests, whom He reminds of the favor conferred on them in preference to other nations, by His sending them prophets, and by coming Himself to show them the way to true happiness, and whom He also reproves for their shameful ingratitude in misusing His gifts to their own eternal ruin and in stoning the prophets and those who were sent to them, as they afterwards did the holy Martyr, St. Stephen. Ungrateful Jerusalem, how well I have always meant to thee! How

[1] Peccavi Domino.

often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings! "And thou wouldest not! Behold, your house shall be left to you desolate."[1] Alas, how many Christians there are nowadays, whom God might reprove in the same manner! And that is the case, especially with those on whom He confers benefits in preference to many others, and who are blessed by Him every day with temporal prosperity. How well I have meant to you, and yet you repay Me for my goodness by shameful ingratitude! I have shown already, my dear brethren, etc.—*continues as before.*

SIXTIETH SERMON.

ON THE DUTY OF THE RICH TOWARDS THE POOR.

Subject.

It is the bounden duty of the rich to help the poor with alms. Therefore, they who can afford to give alms, and refuse to do so, cannot be excused from sin.—*Preached on the second Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Domine, bonum est nos hic esse: si vis, faciamus hic tria tabernacula.—Matth. xvii. 4.

"Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles."

Introduction.

I can easily believe that Peter would gladly remain in the place where Christ manifested His glory; but I can see from what he said that he thought only of himself, and did not care how others fared; for he wished to build tabernacles for Christ, Moses, and Elias, while he was indifferent as to the fate of the other Apostles, who were not so fortunate as he was. He should rather have said: Lord, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt. I will go and call my brethren, and will build many tabernacles, so that we may all live here together. But Peter never thought of that:

[1] Quoties volui .... et noluisti. Ecce relinquetur vobis domus vestra deserta.

he felt happy, and that was enough for him. Such, too, my dear brethren, is, generally speaking, the way of the world; each one looks after himself and those who belong to him, and cares little for what becomes of others. There are many poor people in the world, some of whom are publicly known as such, while others try to conceal their poverty, all of whom have received from the Almighty God a very small share of the goods of this world. And on the other hand, there are many rich and wealthy people on whom God has bestowed far more than is necessary for their support. The former suffer hunger and want, cold and nakedness, misery and wretchedness; while the greater number of the latter are satisfied with enjoying their superfluous wealth, and thinking with Peter: It is good for us to be here;[1] we are satisfied with the arrangements of providence; let others look to themselves, and provide for themselves as well as they can! But, Christians, that is not right; for the rich are bound in conscience to help the poor and needy with alms. Many, however, do not admit this, and they allow themselves to become victims to a most fatal mistake by imagining that alms-giving is a work of pure generosity, and not a matter of duty. I will now show them their mistake, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

It is the bounden duty of the rich to help the poor with alms. Therefore, they who can afford to give alms and refuse to do so, cannot be excused from sin. Such is the whole subject. It is not so much my object to reprove the avaricious and hard-hearted, for such people do not care much about hearing the Word of God, as to encourage you, my dear brethren, to still greater charity towards the poor and needy. An additional reason for my doing so is the fact that now, during Lent, they who make use of the general dispensation for the use of meat, are bound to make up for the fast they do not observe, by giving alms to the poor.

Do Thou, oh, Lord, help us by Thy light and grace, through the merits of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

The rich generally think that alms-giving is a work of pure generosity.

What do I care about others? Let them look out for themselves; I have enough to do to provide for myself. My money is my own property, I can use it as I think fit; if I do not offend God otherwise, no one can accuse me of sin, if I do not wish to share my wealth with strangers, and therefore I am not

[1] Bonum est nos hic esse.

bound in conscience to give alms; if I do so, then I can follow my own inclination, and give when and how I please, etc. That is the way in which many Christians, who are wealthy, but avaricious or extravagant, think and speak. But it is not difficult to prove that they are grievously mistaken. What do I care about others? you say. Remember that Cain made the same mistake, when God asked him what had become of his brother Abel, and he answered: What is that to me? "Am I my brother's keeper?"[1] It was the mistake, too, of the foolish and avaricious Nabal, who said, when David asked help from him: "Who is David?"[2] What is he to me? I know nothing about him. "Shall I then take my bread and give to men whom I know not whence they are?"[3] But what a miserable end they both brought upon themselves by their hard-heartedness!

It is an obligatory law.

Certainly, you must care for others, and even for the poor and needy, although they may be utter strangers to you, for they are your brothers and sisters in the Lord and have the same heavenly Father. They are created by God from the same material as you, and are redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ, as well as you. They are co-heirs with you to the kingdom of Heaven. They belong to those whom God, by the Wise Ecclesiasticus, commands every one to help in their corporal and spiritual necessities: "He gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor."[4] You must not imagine, says St. Thomas of Villanova, that alms-giving, and helping the poor according to one's means, is merely a matter of generosity, or of counsel. It is a command by which the rich are bound to share with the poor their superfluous wealth, according to their state and means. "The rich are not merely advised, but commanded to give alms."[5] Alms-giving, in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, is called by the Almighty God a debt that is owing to the poor: "Bow down thy ear cheerfully to the poor, and pay what thou owest."[6] This command is founded on three different laws, any of which by itself would be enough to create an obligation, and they are the law of justice and right, the law of Christian charity and mercy, and also a special law to the Supreme Legislator, which He promulgates in the clearest and most impressive manner.

[1] Num ego custos sum fratris mei?—Gen. iv. 9. [2] Quis est David?
[3] Tollam ergo panes meos et dabo viris quos nescio unde sint?—I. Kings xxv. 10, 11.
[4] Mandavit illis unicuique de proximo suo—Eccl. xvii. 12.
[5] Eleemosyna quippe divitibus non consilio monetur, sed præcepto indicitur.
[6] Declina pauperi sine tristitia aurem tuam, et redde debitum tuum.—Eccl. iv. 8.

In the first place, the law of justice and right, which is written by nature in the heart of each individual, and commands us to give every one what is due to him, binds us also to give alms and to help our needy brethren. You say: I am master of my own property, and can use it as I think fit, without asking any one's leave. But I say to you, with the Supreme Lord of all: No, you cannot do so. "Pay what thou owest."[1] You are the owner of your property in the human sense of the term, and no farther. You are not absolute lord of it, so that you can do with it whatever you like, and use it merely for your own profit and pleasure. If you did so, and gave none of it to others, you would not indeed be guilty of injustice before the world, nor could the tribunals of the world punish you; but you must know that there is another tribunal in Heaven which does not give you such absolute dominion, and according to which you would be condemned. St. Thomas of Villanova brings forward the same objection. He says: "It is a hard thing to have to share my property with others. Can I not do as I like with what is my own?"[2] But hear how well he answers it: "How, I ask you, can you prove that all those things are really yours?"[3] On what title do you possess them? Have you created them yourself? Do the earth and the trees bring forth fruit for you alone? The difference between *mine* and *thine* is allowed to subsist only for peace' sake, and that men may be able to traffic and trade with each other. Otherwise, we are not absolute owners of our property. We are stewards who have the use of it, and who are bound to use it according to the will of the Supreme Lord. St. John Chrysostom says: "I have often been forced to laugh when I read wills leaving the ownership of lands or houses to one person, but their usufruct to another."[4] There is no meaning in that: "For we all have merely the use of things, but not their absolute ownership. Our wealth belongs, not to us, but to God. God wishes us to act as dispensers of riches, not as owners."[5]

The law of justice.

God alone is the true Owner of everything that belongs to man. Do you know what Job said when God took away all his property from him? "The Lord hath given," he said, full of patience

Because God is the lawful Owner of all

[1] Redde debitum tuum.

[2] Durum est hoc, numquid de meo non possum facere, quod volo?

[3] Et unde, obsecro, illa tua sunt?

[4] Sæpius risi, testamenta legens, dicentia; ille quidem habet agrorum vel domus dominium, usum vero alius.

[5] Omnes enim usum habemus, dominium autem nemo. Divitiæ nostræ non sunt, sed Dei: Deus enim dispensatores nos divitiarum voluit esse suarum, non dominos.

things, and distributes them to all.

and resignation, "and the Lord hath taken away."[1] Mark those words; for he does not say: "God hath given, God hath taken away;"[2] but, "the Lord hath given," etc., not only that we may thereby see that whatever happens in the world is in accordance with the arrangements of providence, although we think that many things happen on account of the efforts of men; not only to give us an example of patience and resignation to the divine will in poverty and affliction, in crosses and trials, but also to teach us that if God gives us wealth, and takes it away from us, He has the right to do so as the absolute Lord and Master of all. The example of Job teaches us that no man is lawful owner of his property, but merely a steward and servant of God; therefore, if God takes away from me what He has given to me, I should say, not God, but the Lord hath taken away;[3] the Owner of my property has taken it from me. Hence St. Thomas of Villanova says that God, as the Lord of all things, has given temporal goods to men; and if He makes a distinction of property for the sake of peace and that men may traffic with each other, He also imposes on us the duty of sharing our superfluous wealth with those who are in want, so that he who uses his riches only for himself, is guilty of an injustice in the sight of God.

Therefore, more is given to the rich, that they may share with the poor.

And, to take a common-sense view of the matter, my dear brethren, if it is true that there is a God who has created all men, it follows that He has provided what is necessary for the support of all; because he who gives life, must also supply the means of supporting it. Now, all the goods of this world are already portioned out, and there are countless numbers of people who possess absolutely none of them. How does that come to pass? Has God forgotten to provide for these latter? Either that must be the case, or the necessaries of life for the poor must be in the hands of the rich; either the providence of God is defective, and does not care for those who are in want, or else God must have placed that care on those who have superfluous wealth; in a word, either there is no God, or a part of the temporal riches of the wealthy belongs to the poor. The conclusion is perfectly logical. Now, you who say: I am not bound to give alms; if you believe that God has given you all that you have, why do you think He has been so generous to you, while He has given to so many of your brethren and sisters nothing but the beggar's staff as their portion? Do you imagine that Infinite Wisdom has conferred so

[1] Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit.—Job i. 21.
[2] Deus dedit, Deus abstulit. [3] Non Deus sed Dominus abstulit.

many temporal blessings on you, only that you may become rich? Do you believe that the good and merciful Father of all has left so many of His children without any inheritance, only that you may live a more comfortable and pleasant life, and have more money to squander? It is the providence of God which throws money by handfuls, so to speak, into certain families; can it be the only object of that generosity to enable some individuals to live luxuriously and magnificently? Would that end be suitable to the divine Wisdom? Why, then, does He lavish temporal blessings on some, if not that they may in His place look after the poor and help them according to their necessities? Why does God give great riches and few or no children to certain married people, who are best able to provide for them? It is evident that He wishes them to act as fathers and mothers to poor widows and orphans. In the creation God collected all the waters into the sea, not only to fill up the abysses of the deep, or that the sea-monsters might have more room to disport themselves; but that all this water might be distributed over the whole earth in different streams and rivers. In the same way, He has placed all light in the sun, and fixed that orb in the heavens, not because He wishes the earth and all the other heavenly bodies to be in darkness, but that the moon and stars might share its light, and that the earth, receiving the benefit of it at the proper times, might have reason to praise and bless Him who caused such a wonderful thing to exist. So also in an army, he who receives the money to pay the soldiers, cannot use it merely for his own profit, but must give to all the soldiers their proper share of it at the appointed time.

Therefore, they who give no alms act unjustly.

Now, what follows from all this, my dear brethren? It follows that if you refuse to give alms to the needy, although you can easily afford to give them on account of the divine goodness to you, you make a wrong use of your property, and act against the will and command of God who is the true Owner of it, and who has intrusted it to you as His stewards, that you may distribute it amongst your poor brothers and sisters who are in want; you use your property contrary to the rights of the poor, to whom, by divine decree, a part of it belongs, and therefore you evidently act against the law of justice, which forbids a man to do as he likes with what belongs to another, unless he acts for the benefit, or at the command of the lawful owner. Such is the teaching of all theologians, and of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. If I were to give you, in my own words, their opinion of the duty of the rich towards the poor, the majority of you

would think me too severe and exacting, and would refuse to believe me, as I know by experience in other subjects. He who refuses to share his superfluous wealth with the poor, says St. Augustine, is evidently guilty of keeping what belongs to another ;[1] nay, he adds, "if you refuse to give, you must know that you take away the property of others, and keep it unjustly."[2] And again : "Whatever is left over, after you have made becoming provision for your clothing and support, must not be spent in luxury, but should be placed in the treasury of Christ by charity to the poor. If we refuse to do so, we make away with other people's property."[3] Such is also the opinion of St. Basil ; you commit a theft, he says, every time you do not help the poor when you are able. Do you know what kind of a sin you commit, when you refuse to give the necessary alms to the needy ? It is the same, says St. Ambrose, as if you snatched out of a poor man's hand the piece of bread that is necessary to sustain his life. "It is not a greater sin to take away what belongs to another, than not to help those who are in necessity, when you have superfluous wealth."[4] "The bread you have in store belongs to the hungry ; the clothing you lock up belongs to the naked ; the money that you hide in the earth, should be used to redeem poor captives."[5] St. Thomas of Villanova agrees with this holy Doctor, and says that he who refuses to help the poor out of his superfluous wealth, is not only a thief, but a murderer ; and he expressly declares that they who have abundant means must supply the wants of those who have not enough ; if they refuse to do so, they are robbers and murderers. "You murder the hungry man whom you refuse to feed, and you steal from him what you refuse to give him."[6] St. John Chrysostom, in his second sermon on the poor Lazarus, calls the rich glutton a murderer. He says : "The rich man did not take away the poor man's money, but he refused to share his own with him, for it is robbery not to give away anything of what you possess."[7] Do not be surprised at

[1] Res alienas possidentur, cum superfluæ possidentur.

[2] Si nolueris dare, noveris te res alienas auferre, et injuste retinere.

[3] Quidquid excepto victu et vestitu rationabili superfuit, non luxui reservetur, sed in thesauro Christi per eleemosynam reponatur. Quod si non fecerimus, res alienas invasimus.

[4] Neque enim plus est criminis habenti tollere, quam, cum possis et abundes, indigentibus denegare.

[5] Esurientem panis est, quem tu detines ; nudorum indumentum est, quod tu recludis ; miserorum redemptio est et absolutio, quam tu in terram defodis.

[6] Si non supplet, raptor et homicida est; quia, quem non pavisti, occidisti : quæ non dedisti, rapuisti.

[7] Non illius pecunias usurparat, sed suas non impertivit, si quidem et hoc rapina est, non impertiri de tuis facultatibus.

this, he continues, for the Sacred Scripture bears testimony to it; the Lord Himself says by His prophet, to the Jews: "The earth brought forth its fruit and you have not paid tithes, but the plunder of the poor is in your houses. Let us learn from this, that when we refuse to give charity, we incur the same punishment that is due to theft."[1] Therefore, I beg of you to remember always, "that what we do not share with the poor, we rob them of, and thereby we shorten their lives and keep, not our own property, but theirs."[2] Such are the words of St. John Chrysostom. Almost all the other Fathers speak in the same manner, and they are so unanimous on the subject, that there is hardly any difference in the words they use.

Therefore, so many are lost.

Ah, my dear brethren, I am not surprised that so many are lost forever! For what wonder is it that Heaven should be closed on those who are guilty of theft? Why should we be astonished that eternal damnation is the lot of those hard-hearted masters who refuse to pay their servants and laborers their proper wages; of those wicked judges who ruin whole families by unjust sentences; of those insatiable harpies who fatten on the tears of poor widows and orphans; of those greedy usurers who make their profit out of the difficulties of others? Is it matter for surprise, I ask, that such people should go to hell? But to the number of those belong all who possess superfluous wealth, and refuse to give alms to the poor. For, according to the unanimous teaching of the holy Fathers, there is no difference between stealing the property of another, and refusing to give charity to the poor. And how many Christians there are who have no idea of giving alms, or at all events, do not give them according to their means!

Shown by examples.

This is one of the snares by which the devil entraps numbers of souls, and drags them down to hell. A pious hermit once thought to himself: Which of the evil spirits did the most harm to souls? Certainly, he said, it must be the demons of impurity, because experience teaches that impurity is the most common vice in the world. While occupied with these thoughts, he saw three Moors sitting under an oak-tree; the first had a shoemaker's awl and a thick thread in his hand, while several human heads lay on the ground beside him; these he took up, one after the

[1] Produxit terra proventum suum, et non intulistis decimas, sed repina pauperum est in domibus vestris. Propter hoc discamus, quod quoties eleemosynam non præstiterimus, pari cum his, qui spoliant, supplicio afficiemur.

[2] Quod non communicare pauperibus, est rapina exercere in illos illorumque fraudare vitam, quodque non nostras, sed illorum res detinemus.

other, and sewed the lips together. What are you doing? asked the hermit. I am a much more powerful spirit than those others of whom you are thinking, replied the Moor, and my name is, "He who shuts the mouth;"[1] my duty is to close the mouths of sinners, that they may not declare their sins in confession. The second Moor had a great number of hearts which he threw into a sack and fastened up. What are you doing? asked the holy man. I am a devil, was the answer; my name is, "He who shuts the heart;"[2] no matter how much my companions may labor for the destruction of souls, as long as the heart remains open to sorrow and repentance, the soul can easily escape, and the mouth will at once open to make a good confession; therefore, I shut up the heart, that it may not escape from me. Still, my neighbor is more powerful than I. The hermit then saw that the third Moor was occupied in shutting up a number of bags and boxes with many locks and bolts. What are you doing? he asked. I also am a devil, was the answer; my name is, "He who shuts the purses;"[3] no one is so powerful as I in ruining souls. I go to those with whom my companions can do nothing, and who are not subject to any great vices or sins; I allow them to go often to confession and communion, and to hear Mass every day; I even encourage them to all kinds of pious practices, that they may imagine themselves to be good and holy; but I take care to tie up their purses, and lock up their coffers, that they may not pay their lawful debts, or that they may refuse the proper wages to the laborers whom they employ, or that they may not give alms to the poor out of their superfluous wealth. In that way I manage to bring many souls to eternal ruin. This devil succeeded in betraying the rich citizen of whom Cæsar Baronius writes, under the year 553. The citizen lay sick at Constantinople, and as he had a great fear of death, he caused thirty pounds of gold to be distributed among the poor, although he had always been very niggardly towards them. When he recovered his health, he repented of his generosity, and openly manifested to one of his friends his sorrow thereat. His friend said to him: You should rather be glad, since you may now expect a great treasure from God in return. But if you like, come with me to the Church, put me in your place and say to God: "Lord, not I, but this friend of mine gave the charity;"[4] and when you do that I will pay you the thirty pounds back out of my own money. The wretched man

[1] Claudens os. [2] Claudens cor. [3] Claudens crumenas.
[4] Domine, non ego, sed iste dedit eleemosyna.

accepted the proposition with joy; he went to the Church, but did not return from it, because after he had spoken the words agreed upon, before the altar, and received the money from his friend, he fell dead at the Church door, with the money still in his hand, to the great terror of all who were present. "Wretched man," says Father Drexelius, writing about this occurrence: "Wretched man, thou hast lost thy soul for the sake of thy money; and now thou hast lost both money and soul forever!"[1] Would to God, my dear brethren, that the unfortunate man had not so many imitators among Christians nowadays, for there are only too many whose purses the devil closes against the poor!

Who complain unwisely of this decree of providence.

But, some may think, why does not God distribute the goods of this world equally amongst men? If He were to do so, there would be an end to all this trouble; they who are now poor, would have enough, and need not trouble the rich; every one would be better off, and no one would be obliged to concern himself about others. Why, then, has He placed such a number of poor people in the world, that one hardly knows what to do? Could not He provide for them? Away with such thoughts! God wills it! God decrees and appoints it! Who will dare to find fault with it? What God does is well done and cannot be better. St. Basil and St. Ambrose assign the following reasons for this most wise arrangement of providence: First, that each one may have an easier way of gaining Heaven, the rich, namely, by practising charity and alms-giving, the poor by patience and resignation to God's will. Secondly, that we may be united more closely together, for the rich must look on the poor as their foster-children, while the poor must look on the rich as their foster-fathers, provided they fulfil their duty. Thirdly, it shows how wonderfully and how lovingly God deals with us; for if He had given us all an equal share of wealth, none of us would think of being specially grateful to Him for His goodness, for we are not apt to look upon that as a favor which others have as well as we. Who thanks God for the light of the sun during the day? Yet it is a great benefit; but as all enjoy it, no one thinks of being specially grateful for it. On account of the difference in the distribution of worldly goods, the rich can see that the divine generosity places them under a special obligation; while the poor have occasion to praise the fatherly goodness of God, who appoints the rich as their guardians to pro-

[1] O miser, ut servares pecuniam, perdidisti animam; ita et pecuniam et animam æternum perdidisti.

vide for their wants, and thus in most unexpected ways supplies them with what they are in need of. Fourthly, if this inequality were wanting, and all were sufficiently wealthy, there would be no servants, no laborers, no one to till the land, to bake the bread, etc., so that every one would be badly off, as I shall prove more in detail, in another sermon. Such is the law of justice and right, my dear brethren, which obliges us to give alms and to help the poor according to our means.

Alms-giving required by the law of Christian charity.

Is not this enough? Then I will tell you of another law which is not less obligatory than the first, and that is the law of Christian charity. Let us examine this law briefly, to see whether we are free, or not, to refuse to give alms: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," and thou shalt love him, "as thyself."[1] Mark these words; if God had simply said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," that ought to suffice to make us always generous in helping our poor brethren. For, as all experience who love truly, love is not merely generous, but extravagant, and it gives and gives, until the beloved person is completely satisfied. Now, nothing is required from the wealthy but what is necessary for the proper support of the poor according to their state; and if there was such a thing as true Christian love among the rich, they would not be content with merely doing that much; they would be ready to take the bread out of their own mouths, to share it with their poor and beloved fellow-creatures. Good and pious Christians (as we all should be), how do you act? You have often fasted that you might feed the hungry; you have often stripped yourselves to clothe the naked; you have slept on the bare earth and given away your beds to the sick poor; you have sold all your goods, and given the money to the needy; you have become slaves and sold yourselves, when you had nothing else left, that you might redeem poor captives; and you did all that through charity! So that, I repeat, it ought to be more than enough if God had said merely: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor."[2] But He adds to that, thou shalt love him, "as thyself."[3] Now, can that command be fulfilled without giving alms? Could I persuade any reasonable man that I love my neighbor as myself, when I see him going about in the depth of winter in miserable rags, while I have all kinds of fine clothes to show off in before the world, and my wardrobe is filled with things that I have no use for? Do I love my neighbor as myself, when

[1] Diliges proximum tuum, sicut teipsum.—Matth. xxii. 39.
[2] Diliges proximum tuum. [3] Sicut teipsum.

my table is loaded with all sorts of exquisite viands that the satiated stomach refuses, although there are numbers of poor people whose tears are perhaps their only food? Is that the way to love my neighbor as myself, to treat him as I could reasonably wish him to treat me, if I were suffering from poverty? No; that is more like deadly hatred than brotherly love. It sometimes happens that when two or three persons are travelling together in winter time, they are obliged to seek shelter in a hut, where they have barely enough covering during the night. Now, if the three love each other as they ought, and are not too selfish, they will be able to manage well enough to keep themselves warm, but if one of them takes all the covering to himself, the other two will suffer from the cold. Such is, generally speaking, the conduct of the rich and wealthy: they take all the covering to themselves, nor do they trouble themselves in the least about others who are left without any covering, as long as they themselves are warm and comfortable. But, my dear Christians, the commandment that God has given us, and one of His principal commandments, too, says: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,"[1] not merely in words, but, as St. John says: "In deed and in truth."[2] Now where is that love? Acknowledge, therefore, that you sin against the law of charity when you refuse to assist your neighbor who is in want, although you are able to do so.

The law commanding almsgiving under pain of hell.

Finally, that no one may try to excuse himself from this obligation under any pretext, God has, in addition to the two laws of justice and charity, published another in which He especially commands us to give alms. A wealthy man asks me: Am I guilty of sin if I do not give alms to the poor? I ask him in return: Can any one be condemned to hell unless on account of sin? No, he says, because that is the punishment for sin, and in fact, for mortal sin; and such is indeed the case. But now I reply, a man can be condemned to hell for not giving charity, and what is still more, for that alone, although he has no other mortal sin on his soul. Amongst the reprobates who will stand at the left hand of the Judge on the last day, there will not be one who will not have sinned against this law; for the words of the Judge, after passing sentence, will be spoken to all the reprobates in general: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire;"[3] "For I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat,"[4] etc.

[1] Diliges proximum tuum, sicut teipsum. [2] Opere et veritate.—I. John iii. 18.
[3] Discedite a me, maledicti, etc.—Matth. xxv. 41.
[4] Esurivi enim, et non dedistis mihi manducare.—Ibid. 42.

On the other hand, among the elect of Christ, there will be many who will have committed all kinds of grievous sins; but there will not be one who will not have practised charity towards the poor: otherwise, how could Christ truly say to all whom He will call to His eternal kingdom: "For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat"?[1]

Therefore, there is a grievous obligation to help the poor.

"Do you still believe," is the conclusion of St. Gregory Nazianzen, "that charity to the poor is not a matter of necessity, but of choice, and that it is not a law but a counsel? I wish I could agree with you, but I am frightened at the left hand, the separation of the sheep from the goats, and the sharp reproof the Judge will give to the latter, not because they have stolen, but because they have not helped Christ in His poor;"[2] so that I can have no doubt of the obligation. Could He command alms-giving more impressively than by threatening punishment on those who neglect it? Could He command it under a more severe penalty than that of hell-fire? Therefore, my dear brethren, it is clearly not a matter of mere choice with us, to give alms or not, for that we are obliged to give them is evident from the law of justice, from the law of charity, and from the special law commanding us to do so. Is it not strange, then, that there are still Christians who do not acknowledge this obligation? I know very well what most of them say; they pretend that they have no superfluous wealth; that their state in life requires all the money they have, and therefore, they maintain that they can give little or no alms; but I will deal with their excuses on a future occasion.

Cannot determine by general rule how much alms one is bound to give.

Meanwhile, conscientious people, who are generally the most liberal to the poor, will perhaps become troubled and uneasy, and will think to themselves: How have I fulfilled this obligation hitherto? How much alms am I bound to give to the poor? I do not wish to give too much, nor yet too little, that things may go well with me in judgment. Yes, my good people, that is indeed a weighty question! But it is one to which a general answer cannot be given; and no theologian, or preacher, or confessor can lay down any rule in this case; for there are many circumstances to be taken into consideration. For instance, one must consider the necessity of the poor, whether it is extreme or

[1] Esurivi enim, et dedistis mihi manducare.—Matth. xxv. 35.

[2] An benignitatem hanc non necessariam, sed tibi liberam esse putas, ac non legem, sed consilium? Hoc quoque et ipse vellem, sed me sinistra manus terret, et hædi et probæ, quæ in eos a judice conjiciuntur, non quia bonis alienis manus intulerunt, sed quia Christum per pauperes minime curaverunt.—St. Gregory Nazianzen, Orat. 6. *De Pauperum Amore.*

serious, or merely ordinary; the means that one possesses, whether his income is large, or small, or moderate, whether he has much superfluous wealth, or none at all, and whether his family is large or small, and different circumstances of the kind. In extreme necessity, which rarely occurs, that is, when a poor person is in danger of death through want, all theologians agree in saying that one is bound to succor such a poor person, even if one has not superfluous wealth, and has to deprive himself of something necessary in order to do so. In serious necessity, when, for instance, a respectable man or woman would be reduced to beggary through want, theologians generally agree with St. Thomas in saying that one who has superfluous wealth, is bound, under pain of mortal sin, to give alms in such a case, unless the poor person can get help elsewhere. In the ordinary, every-day necessities of the poor, no one, even if he has superfluous wealth, can be accused of grievous sin, if he refuses alms to those who beg from door to door; especially if he thinks that he can find more deserving objects of charity among the decent poor. Otherwise, theologians agree in teaching that he who has superfluous wealth is in a very dangerous state if he makes up his mind to give no alms at all, or to give them only to those who are in extreme or serious necessity; nay, many are of the opinion that such a person could not be excused from actual sin; not that he is guilty of sin every time he refuses to give charity, but on account of his determination not to give it unless to those who are in extreme or serious necessity. St. John Chrysostom says: "They will perish, who do not support Christ." [1]

Conclusion and exhortation to be generous towards the poor.

The best and most salutary advice that can be given in the matter, is this: Let each one give so much to the poor, that considering his means and position, he will merit the name of a generous and charitable Christian. That name would be deserved, for instance, by a tradesman who has to support himself and his family from day to day, and who now and then gives a piece of bread to a poor person; but such would not be the case with one who is richer. He who has the proper love of God and of his neighbor, and who is therefore determined to fulfil his duties as a Christian exactly, will be enlightened by the grace of God, and by his own sound reason, as to how much he ought to give away in charity. One thing is certain, and that is, that the world knows by experience how easy it is for people to be reduced to want by luxury and extravagance, while no one can point

[1] Peribunt, qui Christum non aluerunt.

to an instance of poverty being caused by alms-giving; and therefore I say that we need not be anxious as to whether we give too much, although we may well be anxious as to whether we give too little to the poor. "According to thy ability be merciful,"[1] is the advice of Tobias to his son; and it is the salutary advice I give you all to-day, by way of conclusion. Remember also the divine threat: "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy,"[2] and on the other hand: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy,"[3] here in time, and in eternity also. May it be so with us all! Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Holy Apostles, Simon and Jude:

Text.

Hæc mando vobis, ut diligatis invicem.—John xv. 17.
"These things I command you, that you love one another."

This command is given not merely to the Apostles and disciples of Christ, but to all men, that they must love one another. This love must be general, and extend to every one, no matter who he may be, great or small, rich or poor, relation or stranger, friend or enemy. For the words: "These things I command you, that you love one another,"[4] are said of all. Nor must this love consist merely in words and outward behavior; it must be, as St. John says, in deed and in truth: "My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth."[5] Have we all that love, my dear brethren? Do they possess it who, in these hard times, could readily give proof of it to poor mendicants and to the decent poor, and yet refuse to do so? No, certainly, for, as St. John says: "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him: how doth the charity of God abide in him?"[6] But many wealthy people do not understand this, and they make a serious mistake by imagining that it is a matter of pure generosity to help the poor, etc.—*continues as before.*

[1] Quomodo potueris, ita esto misericors.—Tob. iv. 8.
[2] Judicium sine misericordia illi, qui non fecit misericordiam.—James ii. 13.
[3] Beati misericordes, quoniam ipsi misericordiam consequentur.—Matth. v. 7.
[4] Hæc mando vobis, ut diligatis invicem.
[5] Filioli mei, non diligamus verbo, neque lingua, sed opere et veritate.—I. John iii. 18.
[6] Qui habuerit substantiam hujus mundi, et viderit fratrem suum necessitatem habere, et clauserit viscera sua ab eo; quomodo charitas Dei manet in eo?—Ibid. 17.

SIXTY-FIRST SERMON.

ON THE VAIN EXCUSES OF THE RICH WITH REGARD TO ALMS-GIVING.

Subject.

Many wealthy people say: I cannot give any alms, or, I can give very little. A vain and empty excuse.—*Preached on the third Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Qui non est mecum, contra me est: et qui non colligit mecum, dispergit.—Luke xi. 23.

"He that is not with Me, is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth."

Introduction.

In different ways men can be with Christ or against Him. In the first place, he who is in the grace and friendship of God and serves Him faithfully, is with Christ, but he who is in mortal sin, is against Christ, and all the good works he performs in that state, are scattered without merit, and without any gain for the next life. Again, and to speak more to my subject, he is with Christ, and gathers with Him, who keeps as his friends those whom Christ has left on earth to represent Himself, and of whom He says: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me,"[1] and of whom He will also say on the last day, after passing sentence: "For I was hungry and you gave Me to eat,"[2] in the persons of the poor and needy. I showed on last Sunday, my dear brethren, that alms-giving, according to one's means, is not a good work of mere generosity, but one of obligation that binds under pain of sin, and if it is neglected, that neglect will be brought forward on the last day as the chief cause of the damnation of the wicked. But I am well aware that many try to excuse themselves from

[1] Amen dico vobis, quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis minimis, mihi fecistis.—Matth. xxv. 40.

[2] Esurivi enim, et dedistis mihi manducare.—Ibid. 35.

that obligation; the times are so hard now, they think; one must keep what he has; we do not know what will happen; I cannot give alms, or I can give but very little. Ah, I must say to them, as Christ said to Peter when the latter was afraid of sinking into the sea: "You of little faith,"[1] what are you thinking of? You are not suffering from want of means, but from want of Christian hope and confidence in God. Can He not always support and provide for us all? Will He be less generous to us, if we share liberally with the poor what He has given us? But if I cannot persuade you to have that confidence, I will at least show how invalid is the excuse you bring forward, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

Many wealthy people say: I cannot give any alms, or I can give very little. A vain and empty excuse. Such is the whole subject. Therefore, be generous to the poor, and heap up treasure for yourselves with Christ in Heaven.

Such is the conclusion that we beg of Thee, O Lord, through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

The first excuse. I have nothing superfluous, proved to be false.

I cannot give much charity, because I have nothing superfluous; I want all that I have for myself and my family. This is the first excuse, and it is made by the spendthrift and the miser alike. But hear what the Holy Ghost says by the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "Three sorts my soul hateth, and I am greatly grieved at their life." What are they? "A poor man that is proud; a rich man that is a liar; an old man that is a fool and doting."[2] Mind, God does not say that He hates a rich man who is proud or cruel, but a rich man who is a liar.[3] Now what does that mean, a rich man who is a liar? A poor man comes to a rich man and asks him for alms, and the latter says: I cannot give any, I want all I have for myself. He is a liar, says St. Augustine; he can gives if he likes, but he will not. "That rich man is a liar who always repeats the same heartless, I cannot, whenever there is question of serving God."[4] If he were to say, I cannot mortify my flesh; I cannot bear hunger and thirst; I cannot fast so often; I cannot

[1] Modicæ fidei.—Matth. xiv. 31.

[2] Tres species odivit anima mea, et aggravor valde animæ illorum. Pauperem superbum, divitem mendacem, senem fatuum et insensatum.—Eccl. xxv. 3, 4.

[3] Divitem mendacem.

[4] Dives mendax est, qui in his, quæ ad Deum pertinent, suum illud frigidissimum toties repetit: non possum.

sleep on the bare ground; I cannot kneel so long; I cannot pray so much, etc., there might be some excuse for him; but when he says, I cannot give alms, he is a liar, and deserves to be loathed by God and man. I will say nothing now of a subject that I have already treated in detail, namely, that charity to the poor is a capital laid out at interest, that will bring in a hundredfold even in this life, according to the divine promise: "Give, and it shall be given unto you."[1] For all charitable people experience the truth of this; while the avaricious are afraid of being at a loss, and so are unwilling to trust to the chance of making a profit by alms-giving, which is an uncertain one in their eyes. But, be that as it may, the rich man is a liar, says St. Augustine, because God has given him more than he has need of. He is able enough to give away money for things that are not at all necessary to him.[2]

For the rich have money enough for unnecessary things.

Do you wish me to prove this to you, my dear brethren? There is many a one who says: I cannot help the poor; I have no superfluous wealth; I want all I have for my own family. But, how is it that you give away so much for vanity's sake, or to gain some distinction, or to enjoy some pleasure? St. Bernard says: "They can find means enough to gratify their own curiosity, but they have nothing to help the poor with."[3] You have money in abundance for gluttony, and drunkenness, and unnecessary entertainments, but you are not able to give a piece of bread to a poor hungry brother, and when he asks you for it, your only answer is, "I cannot."[4] You are able enough to support yourself, although you spend the day in sleep, in paying and receiving visits, in playing cards and losing your money, although you are thus hindered from looking after your household, and lead an idle, and, what comes to the same thing, an unchristian life. And thus you cannot help a poor man who has to work hard from morning till night to earn a scanty subsistence for himself and his children. You say: I cannot. You have money enough to spend on costly hangings and furniture for your house, and to adorn your table with plate, but you can give nothing to the poor citizen who has neither chair, nor table, nor bed, nor house, nor anything to eat: I cannot, is your only answer. You can follow the latest fashions, and dress yourself and your children in a way that cannot fail to suggest immodest

[1] Date, et dabitur vobis.—Luke vi. 38. [2] Potest enim in his, quæ vult.
[3] Inveniunt curiosi, quo delectentur, et non inveniunt miseri, quo sustententur.
[4] Non possum.

thoughts in others, and you can thus be the occasion of leaving to your children and descendants no other inheritance but extravagance in dress, so that they must in the end be reduced to beggary; and you are able to continue your extravagance, despite the hard times, when you have far more reason to go about in sackcloth and ashes like the Ninivites, in order to appease the anger of God. You and your daughters, I say, can do all this to show off before the world, but you have nothing for the poor of Jesus Christ, who suffer and lament, who have hardly a whole shoe or stocking or dress to put on. You have nothing for them but your, "I cannot." You can find money enough to fatten your horses and hounds, to gratify your passions and prepare an eternal hell for yourself, but you have nothing to feed the members of Jesus Christ and to purchase for yourself the joys of Heaven. You say: I cannot. I have no superfluous wealth to give to others. "O rich man, you are a liar,"[1] and are hateful to God!

They thus wilfully make themselves unable to give alms. Shown by a simile.

Still, I can quite believe that you have nothing superfluous; for if you live in that way, how could you have anything left for others? A father once asked an account from his son, whom he had sent to study in a foreign country, of the money he had given him. Three times, he said, during the year, I have sent you money; a hundred and eighty crowns in all; what have you done with all that? Oh, father, said the son, we cannot live sparingly at the University; you must know that I have been obliged to borrow, in your name, a hundred and forty crowns more; I could not manage otherwise. What, said the father in a rage, have you spent three hundred and twenty crowns in one year? But consider, my dear father, said the other, that in a foreign land we cannot have anything without paying for it: food, drink, lodging, clothing, washing, wood, light, books, pens, and paper cost a considerable sum. Show me your accounts, then, said the father. Willingly, answered the son; I am quite ready to do so. Beginning with the smallest item, I spent ten crowns on pens and ink. That will do, cried out the father; at that rate your expenses must certainly amount to more than three hundred crowns. Many rich people also make false accounts in that way, when there is question of giving charity to the poor. My income is barely sufficient, they say; I must spend so many hundreds yearly for new clothes; so many for entertainments, so many for gifts and presents, for servants and attendants, for

[1] O divitem mendacem!

balls and parties, for amusements and recreations, etc. Oh, enough, I must also cry out, I quite believe that you can get through your whole income in that way; if you had the treasures of the Indies, you could spend them, and still your vanity would not be satisfied. If you were satisfied with what really is required by your state of life, and by Christian humility, modesty, and mortification, you would have a great deal over and above your expenses; you might put by half of what you now spend in extravagant dressing, and in eating and drinking, and you could help many a poor person as well. But if you maintain that decency and necessity require you to live in a manner that any Christian would call wilfully extravagant, then, indeed, you will not have much left, and you make alms-giving impossible to yourself. When Holofernes, the general of the Assyrian army, was besieging Bethulia, he cut off the supply of water from the town, and let it flow away in different directions, whereby he reduced the citizens to great extremities, as we read in the 7th chapter of the Book of Judith. The devil often uses the same stratagem with the rich: he cuts off the canals; that is to say, he tries to exhaust their income by all kinds of unnecessary expenses, so that they may have nothing left for Christ and for His poor, and must always be forced to answer the petitions of the poor with the heartless, "I cannot."[1] But they will see hereafter how far that excuse will help them before the judgment seat of God.

Good Christians act otherwise. Shown by examples.

Good Christians who fear God and are concerned for the welfare of their souls, act in a totally different manner; to say nothing of many others of both sexes, who appear to have possessed earthly goods, only that they might act as fathers and mothers to the poor. Cardinal Bellarmine gives us a notable example in this way:[2] In addition to giving two thousand scudi every year to the poor, he used to examine most carefully everything he had in the house, to see whether he had any clothes, plate, or bedding that he could do without; if he found anything of the kind, he immediately gave it to the poor. He had in his palace a sun-dial, the hand of which was broken; he ordered a new one to be made, but when he heard that it would cost several scudi, he said: Let it be, then, I do not want the sun-dial, but the poor are in want of the money. He once had a swollen leg, and was ordered by the doctor to wear a wider stocking, but he would not go to the expense of having one made, that he might not take away so

[1] Non possum. [2] Jacob Fuligattus in Vita Bellarm. l. vii. c. 1

much money from the poor, and thought that if he had one of his old stockings widened with a piece of cloth, it would do. His servants told him that the stocking was now eighteen years old, and that a new piece could not be sewn on to it. While this was going on, a young man came in to beg some charity for his poor mother; the Cardinal, who was so much afraid of spending a trifle for his own convenience, gave the young man two scudi at once. He never had a fire in his room, even in the depth of winter, and what he saved in that way he gave to the poor. A stranger who was suffering from hunger, once desired to have an audience with him; Bellarmine at once stood up from table and gave a share of his own frugal meal to the stranger. A poor citizen once asked him for twelve scudi that he was in want of; the charitable Cardinal, who had no money at the time, gave his ring to the poor man with a note authorizing him to sell it. On another occasion he gave his silver writing-materials to a poor person, and when he was Archbishop of Capua, he told his coachman to sell his horses and carriage, that he might help the poor. He used often to say to him, and to others also: "He who is generous towards God, will find that God will be much more generous to him."[1]

Amadeus the Third, Duke of Savoy, was once asked by an ambassador if he had good hunting dogs. I have the best in the world, he answered, and I will show them to you to-morrow. On the following day he brought the ambassador into his dining-hall, and pointed out to him a number of long tables at which many poor people were being fed. See, he said: "These are the dogs with which I go in chase of God and of Heaven. That is a better way for me to employ my bread and meat, than if I used it merely in pursuit of game."[2] He certainly was a sensible and pious prince!

All rich people could easily do the same, but the contrary happens.

Ah, would that all wealthy Christians imitated these charitable men; so that if they were asked, where is your magnificence, your pomp and splendor, they could point to the poor, and say with truth: See, these are clad with it, that they may prepare a mantle of glory for me in Heaven! Where is the money you spend in carousing and feasting? These decent poor buy bread with it, that they may purchase for me the Bread of eternal life. Where is your gold and silver plate? I have already sent it on to the next world by the hands of the poor, and there I will have it

[1] Qui liberalis erga Deum est, is erga se Deum multo liberaliorem experietur.
[2] Atque hi sunt mei canes venatici etc.

forever. But I am expecting too much altogether; I must come down a good deal in my demands. In ancient times it was the custom among the Romans for overseers to go around from house to house, in order to see if there were moths in the clothes, worms in the meat, or mice in the corn. How necessary it is to have such overseers in our days, when so many superfluous things, that ought to be given to the poor, are consumed by moths, worms, and mice! God help us! If many a poor servant and brother of Jesus Christ had the bread and meat that are given to lap-dogs, to cats, and to other pets, and that those animals refuse often to eat through sheer repletion; if they had the wine to drink that is often forced upon guests against their will at banquets, or that is spilled out on the ground; if they had the clothes that are mouldering away in wardrobes, because they are no longer in fashion; oh, certainly, poor brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, you would rejoice! And if you had the fourth part of the wood that is used during the bitter cold of winter, to make fires in the houses of the rich, for unnecessary parties, you could boil your weak broth, and warm your shivering limbs; if you had the twentieth part of the money that is so freely spent on such occasions, you could have bought bread with it, to keep the hunger from yourselves and your children; if the cast-off clothes that were used in unmeaning masquerades, in which so much money is spent, had been given to you, you might be better clad and protected against the cold! Such is the way of the world, even in the hardest times! Once, during a great scarcity in Rome, Augustus gave a splendid feast, at which he appeared as the god Apollo; the other guests also were dressed up to represent different deities; on this account it became a saying among the people, that the Romans were suffering from hunger because the gods and goddesses had eaten up all the food. These were heathens, my dear brethren! I must sigh, when I consider how Christians act, who are bound to honor Jesus Christ in the persons of His poor, and see how much money is spent on useless vanity, extravagance, and pleasure-seeking, while so many poor people are pining away in misery, as St. John Chrysostom sighed in his time. He says: "Your dog is fat and sleek, your servant is filled to repletion, but your Lord and His suffer hunger, your Christ has not the necessaries of life, and is perishing of want."[1] In a word, there is money

[1] Canis tuus cibo fartus est, famulus tuus satietate rumpitur, at vero tuus et illius Dominus esurivit, Christus tuus alimento caret necessario, fame perit.

enough for worldly pomp; but when one is reminded of the command: "What is over and above, give to the poor,"[1] if Jesus Christ in the person of His poor asks for anything, then there is no bread left, the wine is all gone, the purse is empty; "I cannot,"[2] is the word, I want it myself. Oh, lying rich man![3] I could say the same to you in another way, what Socrates said to one of his pupils who was too fond of talking: "My boy, we must first learn to be silent, and then to speak."[4] My dear Christians, I might say, let us first learn to economize, and then it will not be so difficult for us to give alms.

Second excuse: the poor can apply to other rich people, refuted.

There are many others who can help the poor; they are richer than I, and the poor can apply to them. Such is the second excuse with which the poor are often sent away empty-handed. But if there are people richer than you, who can better afford it, are you, therefore, excused from giving alms? If they acted like you, what refuge would poor Christians find? Would they not be turned away at once from every door? Others give them enough, you say; be it so, but leave out the word enough, for I do not think that many poor people would agree with you in using it, otherwise they would not be so badly off. But suppose that such is the case; are you, therefore, freed from the obligation of practising Christian charity and giving alms? Because others do their duty as they ought, does that excuse you from doing yours? Others can give alms, if they like, I cannot. Is that really the case? Then you may say also: Others can atone for their sins, but I cannot; others may gain the favor and friendship of God, but not I; others may earn for themselves a favorable sentence from the divine justice by their generous charity, but not I; others can save themselves from eternal death and damnation, but not I; others may send their treasures on to eternity before them, by the hands of the poor, but not I; others can gain Heaven, but not I. Do you really desire that? I think not, and therefore, you should help the poor according to your means.

Even the poor can give alms. How?

But I cannot give alms because I am poor myself, and would willingly accept alms from others; this is the third excuse that many make. And it is true enough that where nothing is, nothing can be given, and that is enough to free one from all obligation. Yet, mark this, all of you: even you who live on alms, are

[1] Quod superest, date eleemosynam.—Luke xi. 41.
[2] Non possum. [3] O divitem mendacem!
[4] Mi adolescens, prius tacere, dein loqui discamus.

not therefore excused from practising Christian charity towards others. And how is that? Share with your brethren, now and then, the trifle you have, that has been given to you, and God will be pleased with you. That was what the elder Tobias commended to his son as a most important matter: "According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care, even so, to bestow willingly a little."[1] His meaning was: Always give according to your means; if you are rich you must give a great deal of charity; if you are poor, and have little, except what is necessary to you, even then, God wishes you to give a little to other poor people. And no matter how small your gift is, it will suffice, under the circumstances, if you have a good intention, to purchase Heaven for you. The words of our Lord in the Gospel of St. Matthew are full of consolation: "And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple: amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."[2] Why, my dear brethren, does our Lord say: "A cup of cold water," and not warm water? Hear the beautiful answer that St. Thomas Aquinas gives to this question: "Some one might say: I am poor, I have nothing to give; and therefore our Lord says, a cup of cold water; He does not say warm water, on account of the want of fuel; so that a poor person might not excuse himself,"[3] by saying I have no wood to boil the water with. St. Augustine, speaking of the words of the prophet Isaias: "Deal thy bread to the hungry,"[4] remarks that people, even of poor and lowly condition, are not freed from the obligation of giving alms. He says: "The prophet does not command a whole loaf to be given away, for a poor person might perhaps have only one; but he says: deal thy bread;" that is: "If you are so poor that you have only one loaf, break a piece off, and give it to some poor person."[5]

The widow of Sarephta an example of that.

In the 17th chapter of the Third Book of Kings, we find an interesting example of this in the widow of Sarephta. When there was a great scarcity amongst all the people of Israel, God

[1] Quomodo potueris, ita esto misericors. Si multum tibi fuerit, abundanter tribue; si exiguum tibi fuerit, etiam exiguum libenter impertiri stude.—Tob. iv. 8, 9.

[2] Quicumque potum dederit uni ex minimis istis calicem aquæ frigidæ tantum in nomine discipuli: amen dico vobis, non perdet mercedem suam.—Matth. x. 42.

[3] Posset aliquis dicere: pauper sum, non habeo quod dem: ideo addit calicem aquæ frigidæ.... Non dicit aquæ calidæ, propter inopiam lignorum ne posset se sic excusare.

[4] Frange esurienti panem tuum.—Isai. lviii. 7.

[5] Non dixit, ut integrum daret, cum forte pauper alium non haberet, sed frange panem tuum. Etiamsi tanta paupertas tibi est, ut non habeas nisi unum panem, ex ipso tamen frange et pauperi tribue.

commanded His Prophet Elias to go to Sarephta, where he would receive hospitality from a widow. "Arise and go to Sarephta, a city of the Sidonians, and dwell there, for I have commanded a widow-woman there to feed thee."[1] The Prophet went, and found that the widow was so poor that she had hardly enough food for a single day. Is not this a strange thing, my dear brethren? Were there then no rich people in the country, and none in Sarephta, to whom God could have sent His servant? No doubt there were many of them. And why, then, did God send Elias to a widow who was so poor that she had barely enough for herself? Elias came to her house and asked for a drink of water: "Give me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink."[2] It was not so easy as one might think, to grant this request, for there had been no rain in the country for a long time;[3] so that the wells and springs were all dried up, and water was very dear; yet the charitable woman went at once to fetch some for Elias. Wait a little, he called out after her: "Bring me also, I beseech thee, a little bread in thy hand."[4] Alas, said the good woman, I cannot do so. "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have no bread, but only a handful of meal in a pot, and a little oil in a cruse; behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it, for me and my son, that we may eat it and die,"[5] because we have nothing more left. Certainly an answer like that might well have touched the Prophet's heart, and make him think that he ought to go elsewhere to look for hospitality. Yet he repeated his request: "Fear not, but go and do as thou hast said; but first make for me of the same meal a little hearth-cake, and bring it to me; and after make for thyself and thy son."[6] How selfish his request seems: first for me![7] Man of God, what are you thinking of? Let the good woman first satisfy her natural love for her son! No, first for me! His meaning is clear; let me be sure of getting my share; make for me a hearth-cake.

[1] Surge, et vade in Sarephta Sidoniorum, et manebis ibi: præcipi enim ibi mulieri, ut pascat te.—III. Kings xvii. 9.

[2] Da mihi paululum aquæ in vase, ut bibam.—Ibid. 10.

[3] Non enim pluerat super terram. Ibid. 7.

[4] Cumque illa pergeret, ut afferet, clamavit post tergum ejus dicens; affer mihi, obsecro, et buccellam panis in manu tua.—Ibid. 11.

[5] Vivit Dominus Deus tuus, quia non habeo panem, nisi quantum pugillus capere potest farinæ in hydria, et paululum olei in lecytho; en, colligo duo ligna, ut ingrediar et faciam illum mihi et filio meo, ut comedamus et moriamur.—Ibid. 12.

[6] Noli timere, sed vade et fac sicut dixisti. Verumtamen mihi primum fac de ista farinula subcinericium panem parvulum et affer ad me, tibi autem et filio tuo facies postea.—Ibid. 13.

[7] Mihi primum!

This would be enough to make any one lose patience, but the pious widow heroically overcame her motherly affection. "She went and did according to the word of Elias,"[1] and shared with him her handful of meal, which was all she had. But how pleasing her charity was to God! The Sacred Scripture says: "From that day the pot of meal wasted not, and the cruse of oil was not diminished."[2] Thus, while the whole kingdom was suffering from scarcity, the widow had always more than enough in her house, and when even richer people had not bread to eat, she was not in want of anything. St. Ambrose says: "With a little food she had sufficient nourishment during the whole time of the famine."[3] "You are challenged," says St. John Chrysostom, "oh, Christian, and invited to imitate the widow!"[4]

Example of of a poor shoemaker.

St. Gregory writes of another charitable person, in the following style: There lived in our neighborhood a poor shoemaker, named Deusdedit, a pious and holy man. He used to work hard, and whatever he gained by his labor during the week that was over and above what he required for his own moderate wants, he used to divide amongst the poor on Sundays. It was revealed to another person that a magnificent mansion was being built for this charitable man, in Heaven, but on Saturdays alone.

Of other poor people in our days.

How great must be the joy of the angels when they see some poor Christians in our own days, who are secretly in receipt of alms to help them to keep house, and who, nevertheless, always lay aside something to give to other poor people who come to them for alms! They certainly observe the command: "Deal thy bread to the hungry."[5]

Therefore, there is no excuse for the rich if they do not give alms.

Now, from all this I conclude as follows: If even the poor and needy, who have to live by their work and by the charity of others, are obliged to give alms, how will the rich and wealthy appear before the judgment seat of God, if they give little or no alms, under the pretext that they cannot do so, because they have nothing superfluous? There is no question of their being able to give alms; it is simply avarice that makes them niggardly or else it is a want of faith and confidence in God that makes them afraid they will be at a loss; or it is their extravagance in unnecessary things that leaves them unable to help the poor. Take any two kinds of trees, the linden and the apple-

[1] Quæ abiit, et fecit juxta verbum Eliæ.—III. Kings xvii. 15.
[2] Ex illa die hydria farinæ non defecit, et lecythus olei non est imminutus.—Ibid. 16.
[3] Exiguo cibo perpetuum toto tempore famis invenit alimentum.
[4] Provocaris, Christiane, et a vidua in certamen deduceris!
[5] Frange esurienti panem tuum.

tree: the former spreads its branches in every direction, and makes the most agreeable shelter, while the flowers it produces are most delightful to behold; yet it is but a barren tree that will never bring forth fruit. On the other hand, the apple-tree makes far less show, but it produces thousands of sweet apples. Whence comes this difference? The linden is nice to look at, but it spends all the sap and nourishment it gets from the earth on its leaves and branches; while the apple-tree keeps it all for the fruit alone. There is the same difference amongst men. Some are rich and delight to show off their wealth; their clothing glitters with gold and silver; they eat and drink of the best every day; but little or none of the fruit of Christian charity is to be found in them. On the other hand, there are poor laborers who have to work hard for their daily bread, and who nevertheless are as generous as they can be towards the poor. What is the cause of this difference? The former use up all their sap in producing leaves, that is, in useless expense; while the latter, with the little they have, bring forth the fruit of charity. But woe to those, says St. John Chrysostom, who thus violate the commandment of Christian charity! They will be treated like the tree in the Gospel that our Lord cursed, because it had no fruit, so that it withered up at once. Now, I can understand the meaning of those terrible words of our Lord, in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of Heaven;"[1] and as if He had not said enough, He adds immediately after: "And again, I say to you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven."[2] First, He says that it is very difficult for a rich man to save his soul, and, according to St. John Chrysostom, He means this of all those who possess a great deal of worldly goods, and who are in great danger of being prevented by their wealth from serving God zealously, unless they do constant violence to themselves, and are always humble. And again, He says that it is as impossible, naturally speaking, for a rich man to save his soul, as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, and in those words He alludes to people whose hearts and desires are fixed altogether on riches.

They will save their

Unhappy people that you are, what are you to do? Must you

[1] Amen, dico vobis, quia dives difficile intrabit in regnum cœlorum.—Matth. xix. 23.

[2] Et iterum dico vobis: Facilius est camelum per foramen acus transire, quam divitem intrare in regnum cœlorum.—Ibid. 24.

despair of your eternal salvation? Is there no means by which you can make the difficult way to Heaven easier for you, and remove the impossibility of getting there? Yes, there is a means of that kind. And what is it? Generous alms-giving, as St. John Chrysostom says: "Yet if we consider the matter attentively, we shall see that it is not impossible for a rich man to be saved, especially if he uses alms-giving as a means."[1] For by that means the rich can gain the favor of God. He will give them the special grace of not becoming attached to riches, and moreover, He will save them from many sins and vices. But if they refuse to use even this means; if they are miserly and avaricious, or if they want faith and confidence, or if they go to useless expense and are extravagant, and therefore say: I can give little or no alms;[2] oh, woe to them, then, for their doom is sealed! "They have slept their sleep, and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands."[3] St. Augustine says: "They have found nothing because they have placed nothing in the hands of Christ."[4] And so their sentence is already pronounced: "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy."[5] Their sentence is pronounced: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire. . . . for I was hungry, thirsty, and naked," and you have given me neither food, drink, nor clothing.[6]

souls with difficulty.

What I have said of this subject, my dear brethren, does not mean that I believe the people here present are wanting in their duty in this respect; my sole intention is to encourage you to be charitable to the poor, who represent the person of Jesus Christ, for there are many of them now in these hard times, and there will likely be many more. No, the woe threatened to the uncharitable shall not fall on any of us! As long as we live, we shall always keep God as our Friend; we all wish to die a happy death, to have a favorable judgment, and to purchase for ourselves the kingdom of Heaven. But, since the best means of securing these blessings is generosity to the poor, we are determined to practise it in future. We shall never say, I cannot, but I will

Conclusion, and exhortation to be charitable to the poor.

[1] Veruntamen si attendere voluerimus, non est impossibile salvari, præsertim si ab eleemosyna remedia mutuentur.

[2] Non possum.

[3] Dormierunt somnum suum, et nihil invenerunt omnes viri divitiarum in manibus suis. —Ps. lxxv. 6.

[4] Nihil invenerunt, quia nihil posuerunt in manibus Christi.

[5] Judicium sine misericordia illi, qui non fecit misericordiam.—James ii. 13.

[6] Ite maledicti, etc.: esurivi enim, et non dedistis mihi manducare, etc.—Matth. xxv. 41-43.

help the poor as well as I can, especially the decent poor. If I am not in a position to say to Jesus Christ with Zacheus: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor;"[1] at least I will say, and prove my sincerity by my actions: Behold, Lord, I will lay aside the fourth, sixth, tenth, or twentieth part at least of my goods, according to my means and position, for the poor, and will send it on to eternity by their hands. Thou who art the true Owner of all I possess, shalt have all my superfluous wealth. I will never refuse to assist a poor person, and if I am sometimes unable to give him what he requires, I will at least have a friendly word for him, and show him that my intention is good. Strengthen, oh, Lord, with Thy grace, this resolution of mine, and then I will rejoice, and can rest assured that I am with Thee and that I gather with Thee; that is, that I place my perishable earthly treasures with Thee in Thy eternal kingdom. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Dedication of a Church:

Text.

Ecce, dimidium bonorum meorum, Domine, do pauperibus.—Luke xix. 8.

"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor."

That was indeed a noble offer! "The half of my goods I give to the poor." Nor was it any wonder, therefore, that such a copious blessing was given to the house of Zacheus, by that Lord who never allows Himself to be outdone in generosity by His creatures who share what they have with Him, in the persons of His poor brothers and sisters. Ah, my dear brethren, generosity like this brings with it temporal and eternal blessings, and I have shown elsewhere that the alms you give are not lost, but are like seed cast into fruitful ground that produces a hundred-fold; for they are a sort of exchange by which you can send on your property by the hands of the poor into eternity. I have proved, also, that it is not a matter of mere choice to give alms according to one's means, but an obligation that binds under pain of sin; for the neglect of it will be brought forward on the last day as the only cause of the damnation of the wicked. Would to God that all understood this as they ought!

[1] Ecce, dimidium bonorum meorum, Domine, do pauperibus.—Luke xix. 8.

But how few we find like Zacheus, nowadays, who have the courage to say: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor"![1] The half indeed! If the rich and wealthy gave but the tenth, twentieth, thirtieth, or fortieth part of their goods to the poor of Christ! But they shrug their shoulders and think: Oh, Zacheus was very rich; he could afford it; I cannot do so; the times are bad now; I must look after my own family, etc.—*continues as before.*

[1] Ecce, dimidium bonorum meorum, Domine, do pauperibus.

ON THE STATE OF THE POOR.

SIXTY-SECOND SERMON.

HOW DESERVING OF HELP THE POOR ARE.

Subject.

All poor people, no matter who they are, are deserving of eing helped according to one's means.—*Preached on the fourth Sunday in Lent.*

Text.

Unde ememus panes, ut manducent hi?—John vi. 5.
"Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"

Introduction.

That was an anxious question that came from the heartfelt compassion, love, and mercy of Jesus Christ for the poor and hungry crowd; my dear disciples, where shall we get bread enough for these poor people?[1] There are many men who ask the same question, not through a desire of helping the poor, but through anger and impatience, when a number of poor people come to them for alms. Who can give to all those beggars? they say. There are too many of them! who can find bread enough for them? And they thrust the poor of Jesus Christ away from their doors without mercy and without compassion. Ah, Christians, if you cannot find bread or money for them, give them at least the kind word, so that they may see that you refuse them through sheer inability, and that you have a heartfelt compassion for them! "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" Such is the question of many other rich people, who say: I cannot help the poor; I have nothing superfluous; I can give little or no alms; let them look for bread elsewhere, etc. In reality, such

[1] Unde ememus panes, ut manducent hi?

people are quite able to give alms, but they are avaricious and niggardly; or through want of faith and confidence in God, they are afraid of being at a loss if they help others; or else they spend their money in useless vanity, pomp, and pleasure-seeking, leading idle lives the while, and so they are unable to give alms; but their empty excuses will profit them nothing before the judgment-seat of God, as I proved last Sunday. There are still other Christians, my dear brethren, who find another excuse when they are asked for alms, or exhorted to perform the works of mercy. They back-bite the poor and needy whom they despise in their hearts, and say: Poor people do not deserve my help; they are not worthy of alms. They are generally tiresome, stupid, shameless, deceitful, ungrateful, reckless, and useless people. This idle excuse I will now undertake to refute. And that will be the subject of my sermon, namely—

Plan of Discourse.

They say that all poor people are not deserving of help. I say that all poor people, no matter who they are, are deserving of being helped according to one's means; and I will prove it, too, in order to encourage all wealthy Christians to be as diligent as possible in the practice of Christian charity.

Give us, oh, merciful God, Thy grace to this end, through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of Mercy, and the holy angels guardian.

Many beggars are not worthy of alms in themselves.

If there is a question amongst men as to the honor, love, and respect that ought to be shown to another, it is not always decided by the character of the person under discussion, for very often it is necessary to take into consideration him whose person the other represents. For instance, an imperial ambassador comes to the court of a prince; if his person alone were considered, none of the ministers of the prince would deign to look at him, because, as often happens, he may have raised himself to that eminence from a very lowly position, by his diligence. Yet he actually precedes all the ministers of the prince, and is received with the greatest respect by the prince himself, while counts and other nobles must wait on him at table. And why? Because he represents the emperor, who receives all the honor that is paid to his ambassador. Now, my dear brethren, if we consider the poor, as they are in themselves, we should often hesitate before having anything to do with them, allowing them to

enter our houses, or treating them in a friendly manner, and it is also true enough that many of them are not at all deserving of charity, and that they ought to be thrust away from the door at once.

But we must consider whom they represent.

But stop! We must look far higher with the eyes of the mind, and consider the Person whom they represent, and in whose Name they stretch forth their hands for alms. And who is that Person? He is the King of glory, the Supreme Monarch of Heaven, Jesus Christ Himself, who expressly says: "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me."[1] Christ is hungry, thirsty, and naked, and it is to Him that food, drink, and clothing are given; it is He who suffers want and expects consolation, whenever the decent poor ask for help; it is Christ who knocks at the door when a poor person comes, and He it is who asks for a piece of bread for God's sake, as I have shown in a former sermon. Now, that is the basis of my subject to-day. If that is properly understood, all the pretexts for refusing to give alms on account of the unworthiness of the poor, fall to the ground of their own accord. Yet, we shall consider some of them in detail.

Therefore, even the lowest beggars must be respected.

In the first place, then, the over-sensitive, delicate, and sensual children of the world are disgusted at the bare sight of a beggar, and they would be ashamed to speak a kind word to him, on account of his poverty. What brings such wretched people in our way? they ask. They are so dirty, that they infest the whole house with a bad odor when they stand at the door. I cannot bear such people, and will have nothing to do with them, etc. And so they look upon them as undeserving of charity. But this is the most unchristian pretext that could be invented. Is their very misery to be the reason of their being turned away empty-handed? It should rather inspire you with greater compassion for them. If they were fed and clothed by the Almighty God as well as you are, they would not require your help, and they could appear much cleaner and neater; give them, therefore, what Christian charity and mercy require, and they will be much better off in future. No matter how troublesome, filthy, and untidy a poor beggar appears, you must know that under his rags is concealed the Person of Christ, whom the Prophet says that, although He was the most beautiful of the children of men: "And we have seen him and there was no sightliness. And we have thought him as it were a leper, and

[1] Quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis minimis, mihi fecistis.—Matth. xxv. 40.

as one struck by God."[1] He says of Himself: "But I am a worm and no man: the reproach of men and the outcast of the people."[2] Ought you as a Christian to feel disgust at the misery of your Saviour by which He freed you from the filth of sin, when He comes to you in the persons of His poor? Ought you to disdain to give Him alms with your own hand, or, because He seems too ill-clad, to hesitate about receiving Him into your house, and setting food before Him? Ah, if you speak and think thus of the poor, your faith is gone as well as your charity!

How pious Christians act.

The holy bishop Aidan, as the Venerable Bede writes, was presented by King Oswin with a beautiful and richly caparisoned horse as a special mark of favor. As the bishop was one day riding this horse, a beggar met him and asked for alms for God's sake. Aidan immediately dismounted, gave the horse, just as it was, to the poor man, and went home on foot. The king was very angry when he heard that his costly gift was valued so little, and sending for the bishop, he said to him: Is a poor beggar of such great value, then, in your sight, that you must give him a king's horse to ride? Is there no other way of helping such people? Aidan answered in a friendly tone; "Is a horse, then, more valuable in your eyes than the Son of God?"[3] Is any horse too costly for Him? Whereupon the king saw his error and apologized for it at once; he said: "Henceforth I will never prescribe to you how much of our money you shall give to the poor children of God, for it is all in your hands."[4] So we, too, should think, my dear brethren, whenever the misery of the poor is repulsive to us. Is the Son of God, then, too wretched for me? Am I too great to minister to and help Him? It was this thought that gave courage to pious and holy people, to seek out the most miserable of the poor, to wait upon and attend to them, as they would on Christ Himself. Such was in particular the conduct of the holy Count Elezearius, who delighted in showing his generosity to poor lepers. Every day he used to wash the feet of twelve of these wretched people; he dried them with his own hands and kissed them respectfully; he placed them at his own table and waited upon them as if they were kings or princes; the more disgusting they were, the more did he see and honor Christ in

[1] Vidimus eum, et non erat aspectus. Et putavimus eum quasi leprosum, et percussum a Deo.—Isai. liii. 2, 4.

[2] Ego sum vermis et non homo: opprobrium hominum et abjectio plebis.—Ps. xxi. 7.

[3] Numquid tibi charior est filius equi, quam Filius Dei?

[4] Nunquam deinceps præscribam, quantum de nostra pecunia filiis Dei tribuis, quæ tota in manu tua est.

them. As he was once going to hunt, he came to the house of a poor leper, in which there were six wretched beings who looked more like dead bodies than living men, so hideously were they deformed; their lips were eaten away, their teeth had fallen out, their mouths and throats were quite black, and their pallid countenances made them look like ghosts; but the Count, although he was brought up in the royal court, did not experience the least disgust at sight of them. He saluted them in a friendly manner, spoke to them of the joys of Heaven to encourage them to patience, and having given each of them the kiss of peace in token of respect, and distributed generous alms amongst them, he took leave of them. That was the way in which he imitated Christ our Lord, of whom the royal Prophet said: "He shall save the souls of the poor. He shall redeem their souls from usuries and iniquity, and their name shall be honorable in his sight."[1] But the over-delicate children of the world look at the matter in a totally different light, and therefore they often turn away the poor without mercy or pity!

Even importunate beggars must not be despised.

But, say others, beggars are so importunate and shameless. If you once give them anything, they will never let you rest; they will spend the whole day at your door. If you stretch out a finger to them, they will require the whole hand. I would willingly give them something now and then, if they were more modest in their demands, and if they would leave me in peace afterwards. As it is, I never give them anything. Now, that is a hard thing to say, and a very wrong thing too, for a Christian! Must a poor man, then, be always turned away, and never allowed to come a second time to you? How do you act with your own children? As soon as they open their eyes in the morning, they cry out for their breakfast. Do you refuse to give it them? By no means; you give it them gladly. Why? Because they are hungry. But two hours hardly elapse, when they ask again for something to eat. It is the same story at noon, repeated again at three or four o'clock, and so on until they go to bed at night. And yet your patience is not exhausted; you do not complain that your children are importunate and shameless, for you know that they require something to eat frequently during the day. You are quite right, too. But you should remember that the poor beggar is also driven by necessity to come to you several times during the week. He must have

[1] Animas pauperum salvas faciet. Ex usuris et iniquitate redimet animas eorum, et honorabile nomen eorum coram illo.—Ps. lxxi. 13,14.

something every day to appease his hunger, and therefore you must change your opinion altogether, and say, not, I will never give him anything, but, I will always give him whatever I can afford, and at least I will have a kind word for him and promise to help him another time. If you saw Christ in the person of the poor, you would not be so wroth at their importunity.

Example of other pious Christians.

Pious Christians manage much better. One Easter Sunday, Oswald, king of England, was sitting at table with Aidan, the charitable bishop of whom I have already told you. A servant who had charge of the poor came in great haste into the room, and whispered to the king that there was quite a crowd of beggars below, who were much more importunate than ever before, in their demands for bread. The pious king did not hesitate long. Take away, he said, everything you have prepared for us, silver plate and all, and divide it as fairly as you can amongst the poor people, so that they may be satisfied. Aidan, delighted at the great patience and charity shown by the king, seized his right hand and kissed it respectfully, saying: "This hand shall never decay." His prophecy proved true, for when Oswald was afterwards slain in battle, his right hand was placed in a silver vessel, and, according to the testimony of the Venerable Bede, remained uncorrupted. Thomas Cantipratanus relates a similar story of Theobald, a French count, who, of all the nobles of France, was the most generous to the poor. Once in particular he showed great charity towards a beggar who met him on a cold winter's day, and who, in a seemingly most importunate and shameless manner, begged for alms. Theobald asked him in a friendly voice what he wanted. Give me something, said the beggar, to cover my head with. The count immediately took off his cap, and gave it to him. Oh, said the poor man, give me a coat, too; and his request was granted at once. But he was not yet satisfied, for he asked for the vest also, and the count gave it to him. Ah, sir, said the insatiable beggar, see my poor bald head; give me your hat to cover it with. The count's face grew red as fire, for he was bald also, but instead of getting angry, he merely said: My good friend, I would willingly give you my hat, but I cannot do without it. Hereupon the seeming beggar disappeared with all that Theobald had given him. The good count was at once overwhelmed with sorrow. He leaped from his horse, looked around him on all sides, struck his breast, cried, lamented, and called in a tearful voice on the supposed beggar to return, offering him all his goods, and himself even

as his servant and slave. But his cries were in vain, for the other did not return. The count then made a firm resolution never again to refuse anything to a poor person, and to observe faithfully the advice of our Lord: "Give to every one that asketh thee."[1] And his generosity was well rewarded, in this life and in the next, according to what a deceased and now blessed beggar prophesied of him. What do you think of this, Christians, who, if a poor person comes to you the second time, turn him away, and say that he has no shame?

Even if poor people pretend to be worse off than they really are, or if they are deceitful.

All very well, say a third class of people; but we cannot believe the poor; they often deceive us by pretending to be poor when they are not, or by exaggerating their poverty and misery. They often pretend to be sick, blind, wounded, or crippled, when in reality they are strong and vigorous in every respect. St. John Chrysostom answers these objections. Why are you so scrupulous and anxious, he says, to know whether the poor man, whom you ought to help in the name of Christ, deserves assistance or not?[2] Who knows whether he is not begging for some one else who is really poor, if he does not want alms himself? Certainly, you cannot know that. And if his poverty or sickness is not so great as he pretends, that condemns you more than him, for he knows by experience that he has to do with hard-hearted and miserly people, who will not give a penny, nor a piece of bread, unless it is almost forced out of them, and therefore he makes the most of his misery in order to excite your pity—a thing he is obliged to do more by your want of charity than by his own poverty. You say, they are deceitful, and pretend to be blind, lame, etc. Ah, St. John Chrysostom says: "Are you not afraid that your words will bring down a thunderbolt on your head?"[3] Is it likely that a man would torment himself so much for the sake of a piece of bread, if he were not in want of it?

At all events, he who gives alms will not be deceived. Shown by an example.

Suppose, even, that now and then deceit is practised, that some pretend to be poor who are not so; it is very true that they do wrong, and they are bound in conscience either to restore the alms they have unjustly received, or to give them to other poor people just as if they had stolen them. Still you are not deceived in the least; the alms you have given for Christ's sake to such deceitful people have not lost their value, and if you are in the state of grace and have given them with a good intention, you

[1] Omni petenti te tribue.—Luke vi. 30.
[2] Quid stipem deposcentem scrutaris? Quin illum ob Christi gratiam accipe.
[3] Non times, ne fulmen ab hoc verbo cœlitus accensum in te feratur?

can gain Heaven as a reward for them. The Blessed Jordanus, as Humbertus testifies, once gave his under-garment to a beggar, because he had nothing else to give. But the beggar was an impostor who only pretended to be sick and poor, and who immediately sold the garment and spent the price of it in drink. The companions of Jordanus, who saw this, laughed at him, and said: A fine use, indeed, has been made of your charity! Yes, answered Jordanus, I gave it because I thought the man was sick and poor; although I now know the contrary to be the case, I am not sorry for what I have given away: "For I think it is better to lose a coat, than to lose charity to the poor;"[1] I have given an alms to Christ in the person of that pretended poor man; what that man is in reality is nothing to me. And so it is, my dear brethren, if we are deceived, it is far better that it should happen through charity and mercy on our part, than that we should refuse to assist the poor of Christ through hard-heartedness. A too great anxiety to distinguish between really poor people and impostors, makes many very uncharitable; and very often they who are really deserving of alms, suffer from our determination not to give anything to impostors. The Emperor Tiberius, under the pretence of hindering all attempts at dishonesty, kept all the salaries of the senators himself, and commanded a public inquiry to be made in the senate-house, to see who were really in want of such salaries. The result of this was, that the poor, being ashamed of such a public inquiry into their circumstances, got nothing at all. It is just the same nowadays with those who are always trying to find out whether the poor are deserving of alms or not; they leave the majority of the poor without any assistance. St. John Chrysostom says: "If Abraham had always been so cautious about the strangers he received, he would perhaps never have had the happiness to entertain angels. He might probably not have known them to be angels, and would have turned them away like others. But since he received every one, he also merited to receive angels."[2] The three strangers who were going to Bethal, gave two loaves of bread to Saul, thinking him to be a poor man, and in reality he was a king; and in any case, no matter who Saul was, the alms given to him was received by the King of Heaven, who richly rewards such works of mercy.

[1] Judico enim adhuc, melius esse, amisisse tunicam, quam perdidisse pietatem.

[2] Si Abraham scrutatus fuisset circa refugientes ad se, nunquam angelos hospitio recepisset; fortassis enim non putans eos angelos esse, cum reliquis repulisset, sed quoniam omnes suscipiebat, suscepit et angelos.—Hom. 11.

Therefore, "give," if you can, "to every one that asketh."[1] Let it suffice for you to know that it is Christ, the Son of God, who undertakes to reward those who give alms.

Even they who seem to be strong and healthy must not be refused on that account.

What, says a fourth, must I give alms even to those who are strong and healthy, and able to earn their bread, but who spend their time loitering about the streets, and taking the bread out of the mouths of the poor people? No one ought to give them anything; they should be made to work. I know that there are such people, and therefore it is always safest to give charity to the decent poor, who must work hard the whole day, and still can hardly earn enough for themselves and their children, while they are ashamed to beg publicly. But those idlers, as you call them, are also really in want; for who is there who would trust them with any work? Be that as it may, however, you will not lose the merit of your charity, if you give them alms. Tell me, says St. John Chrysostom to a rich man, where do you get your wealth from? Is it the fruit of your own toil and labor? Did you inherit it from your parents? or have you increased it by your diligence? But who has blessed you with prosperity? Who has protected your property from thieves, fire, storms, plunder, and other misfortunes? Who has given you such success in your business, that you have now more than you want, while others, although they are strong and healthy, must beg their bread from door to door? Who has done all that? The Almighty God and no other; it is to His goodness that you must ascribe your prosperity. Give to Him, then, the honor and glory of your possessions, and do not turn away any one to whom He has not been so generous as He has been to you! Be not ungrateful to your Benefactor! For it would be ingratitude in you to refuse an alms to Him, when He asks it of you in the person of a poor beggar, and to turn him away from your door with harsh words.

They who are not grateful for the alms bestowed on them.

The fourth excuse is, that the poor are generally ungrateful; once they have received the food, clothing, or other alms given to them, they go away without returning thanks; they never think of the benefit they have received until they are again in want: God knows whether they even say an Our Father for it. Certainly, it is the duty of the poor to show gratitude and respect, as well as they can, to those who give them alms; but if they do not fulfil their duty, are you, therefore, freed from your obligation of performing the works of Christian charity and mercy?

[1] Omni petenti tribue.

If you seek the gratitude and respect of men as the only reward of your charity, oh, then I pity you, for you have made a bad investment of your capital! Remember that you give the alms to God Himself by the hands of the poor, and if you gain His grace and favor thereby, and the kingdom of Heaven as well, is not your reward sufficient? If you persist in urging that excuse, you show that you have not a supernatural end in view, when you give alms. The Patriarch John, who was surnamed the Almoner, once gave ten pennies to a beggar. The latter, thinking the alms too small, commenced to abuse, and even to curse and swear at the holy man, so that the servants of the Patriarch were on the point of beating the man. But John forbade them to do so, and told them to let the poor man alone. He said: "Let him talk as he likes,[1] but," turning to his steward, "do you give him the purse, that he may take as much as he pleases, and so correct the fault I have committed by not giving him enough." Thus this holy man was not only generous to the poor, but he also bore their ingratitude and coarseness with the greatest patience, knowing that Christ Himself stood before him in their persons. Remember this, Christians, I repeat, to make the poor work for you and then to give them something, as is the practice of some people, is not alms-giving, but paying wages. Do you think you will gain Heaven in that way? Will you dare to represent an act of that kind to the Almighty as an act of generosity, or to say to Him, when He shall come to judge you: Remember, oh, Lord, Thou wast hungry, and I have given Thee to eat? Yes, He will answer, you have given Me to eat, but I have earned it by my labor, and therefore I do not owe you anything for it. He will give the same answer to those who give alms with what belongs to others, or with unjustly acquired means. No, that is not the way to give alms, but simply to restore what already belongs to the poor, in case you do not find the proper owner; otherwise, restitution should be made to him, and not to the poor. The worst way of giving alms, is to help the poor with the intention of inducing them to commit sins of impurity. But it is a holy and meritorious way of alms-giving, and a delicate invention of true charity and mercy, to give some trifling work, for instance, or to ask some insignificant service from a decent poor person, who is ashamed to acknowledge his poverty, and to pay him for it more than it is worth, so as not to put him to shame, or to make him

[1] Sinite eum, loquatur, quod vult.

think that he is receiving alms. In the same way, although it is not exactly alms-giving, yet it is a work of charity and mercy to employ a poor tradesman or laborer, who has not work enough, in preference to others who are better off.

Even the wicked are not to be condemned or turned away.

Finally, most people say: I would willingly give food, drink, and clothing to the poor, and would give them twice as much, if I only knew that they were pious and God-fearing; but they are generally a worthless lot, who know nothing of God, or of His commandments; they utter ten curses for the one Our Father they say; they live together like savages, and therefore it is not worth while to do anything for them. Shame upon you, Christians, to think and speak in that way! Such is the warning of St. John Chrysostom. Do not try to read the secrets of hearts or to make yourself a judge over the actions of others, or perhaps to accuse them of faults of which you yourself are guilty! "Even if he who asks you for alms is a wicked man, still you must not forget that you will one day have to say to God: Lord, remember not my offences!"[1] Therefore, you should not remember the offences of your fellow mortals, who are perhaps less guilty, in the sight of God, than you. Do not condemn those who may appear amongst the elect on the day of judgment, while you may be amongst the reprobate. You will one day ask a great alms from God, when you will say to Him at the gate of Heaven, with the penitent David: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy!"[2] How can you, a sinner, hope to obtain this mercy, if you now refuse to show mercy to Christ in the persons of His poor, under the pretext that they are sinners, and if you do not follow the example of God Himself, "who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust"?[3] Now if an offended God preserves and provides for even the greatest sinners, how can you refuse them the help they are in need of? Christians, continues St. John Chrysostom, let us not be so careful in examining the consciences of the poor, to try to find a cloak for our own avarice and hard-heartedness. "For it is not on account of the lives and merits of the poor, who receive alms from you, but on account of your good will, generosity, mercy, and charity, that God will reward you."[4]

[1] Quod etsi valde peccator sit illi, qui te rogat: cogito, quia et tu dices Deo; peccata mea ne recorderis.

[2] Miserere mei, Deus, secundam magnam misericordiam tuam.—Ps. l. 1.

[3] Qui solem suum oriri facit super bonos et malos, et pluit super justos et injustos.—Matth. v. 45.

[4] Non enim ex vita et merito accipientium a te pauperum sed ex voluntate tua et liberalitate multa, ex misericordia et bonitate mercedem tibi retribuet Deus.

Alms are not thrown away, even on the most impious.

It is, alas, only too true that many take occasion from their poverty to lead wicked and godless lives; a fact that is all the more to be deplored, since, instead of making their misery a ladder by which to climb up to Heaven the more easily, they wilfully pervert it into a means of hurling themselves into hell, where they will suffer eternal hunger and thirst. It would be advisable also, to prefer the pious to the wicked poor, as objects of charity. Yet, I repeat that alms do not lose their merit, even when bestowed on bad people; for just as the holy Mass is good and holy, even if it is offered by a priest in the state of mortal sin, since Jesus Christ is the principal Person who offers and is offered, so alms-giving is a holy work of charity, although it be performed in favor of a sinner, because the principal Person who receives the alms is, not the wicked man, but Jesus Christ Himself.

Shown by an example.

Peter Telonarius (the same man who had a vision, in which he thought he was standing before the judgment-seat of God and was about to be damned, when he was saved because he had once thrown, in an angry manner, a piece of bread to an importunate beggar), this Peter, who became very charitable afterwards, once met a wicked and godless sailor who had just escaped half-naked from shipwreck. Peter took off his coat, and gave it to the poor sailor. The following night Christ appeared to him with the cross on His shoulders, and spoke to him thus: Peter, do you recognize the coat I am wearing? I thank you for your generosity; "for I was suffering from cold, and you have clothed Me."[1]

Conclusion, and exhortation always to see Christ in the poor.

Oh, Christians, if we only understood that one most important truth, that it is the Son of God who receives alms, then we should not think of making excuses, nor scrutinizing the character of the poor before giving them charity! St. Peter Chrysologus makes a beautiful remark on the words of the Psalmist: "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor."[2] What is the meaning, he asks, of the words, "he that understandeth"? Is it so difficult to understand when a man is poor and in want? That is a thing that we can see with our eyes, and hear with our ears. If I see a man with ragged clothes and folded hands standing before my door; if I hear another complaining and begging for a piece of bread, I can understand at once that both are poor people. Why, then, should he be called

[1] Petre! . . . . quoniam frigore affligebar et tu cooperuisti me.
[2] Beatus, qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.—Ps. xl. 2.

blessed, "who understandeth concerning the needy and the poor"?[1] Certainly because not every one who sees a poor person understands what he is. If a man disguises himself in the clothes of a poor laborer, we do not know what sort of a man he is; if we judge from his dress alone, we should say that he is a laborer. But he may be a great person, who thus disguises himself, although we cannot recognize him as such. It is the same with poor people; they go about masked, and there are few who have understanding enough to know who is concealed under their disguise, for a special light and a strong faith are required to be able to recognize Him who manifests Himself only in the poor, and to see that He who made heaven and earth, appears as a ragged and naked beggar; that He who supports and provides for all, suffers hunger and thirst in the persons of the needy, and that the great God, to whom everything belongs, not only associates with the poor, but begs for and receives alms Himself as a poor man. To understand this well, requires a great and an enlightened mind. That is what the Prophet means when he says: Blessed and ever blessed is he that has such understanding, and acts according to it!

Therefore, we will respect all poor people, after the example of pious Christians.

If we understood that, my dear brethren, it would not be difficult for us, not only to help the poor, no matter what sort they are, with generous alms according to our means, but also to treat them always with the highest respect, as we would the Son of God Himself. Some of the greatest kings and rulers of the world have understood that well; such as Pope Gregory the Great, who always had a number of poor people at table with him, and who waited on them with uncovered head; Louis, king of France, who, through respect, washed with his own hands the feet of the most repulsive beggars and kissed them reverently, after the poor people had been fed by him; Edward, king of England, who took a poor cripple on his shoulders and carried him through the public streets to church, amid the laughter of the people, who imagined that the king had lost his senses; Elizabeth, queen of Hungary, who gave herself up to the service of the poor, and sucked the poisonous matter out of their wounds and ulcers with her own mouth; Placilla, an empress, who waited on the sick poor in the hospitals, and made their beds for them. We are astonished when we hear of people of such high position doing such things; but if we understood properly why they did so, if we could see Jesus Christ, the Son of the most high God in the

[1] Qui intelligit.

persons of the poor, then we should not wonder that even crowned heads held the poor in respect; we should rather be ashamed that we have treated the poor so contemptuously, that we have turned them away from our doors without just cause, and that we have shown them so little mercy and charity. If we understood the matter properly, we should at least resolve to help the poor in future in every possible way. Happy, indeed, is he who thus understands concerning the poor and needy![1]

Resolution of amendment and generosity to the poor.

I have hitherto failed in this point; I confess my fault, oh, my God! Therefore, I have thought so little of Thy poor, and have so often forgotten the charity and mercy I owe them; therefore, I have given them often nothing but harsh words! I considered only their outward appearance, and have not used the light of faith, which would have shown me that Thou, my Lord and my God, art concealed under their poverty! Grant me to see this, O God, now and always, so that I may never look upon a beggar who comes to me, as too repulsive, too shameless, too deceitful, too idle, too ungrateful, too wicked, or too unworthy to receive alms from me. For what I will do for them, according to the firm resolution I now make, will be done for my God and my Saviour. Therefore, too, I shall always treat the poor with humility, respect, charity, and friendliness, no matter who they may be, just as I would treat Thee, if Thou camest in Thy own Person; and at least I will always have a good and friendly word for them, and treat them with every mark of respect. Nor do I ask any other thanks or reward for doing so, but that which Thou hast promised to all who give alms, namely, Thyself in the kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of St. Matthew, Apostle:

Text.

Discite, quid est: Misericordiam volo.—Matth. ix. 13.
"Learn what this meaneth: I will have mercy."

The envious Pharisees who put a bad meaning on, and condemned everything that Christ said, managed to find fault with Him also on this occasion, because he sat at table with noted sinners, and in the house of Matthew, too, who was a publican; that is, one who was known to be a sinner. The meek Saviour answered them by saying: You are angry with Me without cause,

[1] Beatus, qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.

and you have no reason to think these men unworthy of my presence, because they are sinners: "Go, then, and learn what this meaneth: I will have mercy,"[1] even on such sinners. It was for that I came on earth: the sick need a physician, not those who are well. The same excuse is brought forward nowadays, too, my dear brethren, when there is question of showing charity as we ought to the poor and needy. Many wealthy people act like the Pharisees in to-day's Gospel, and speak badly of the poor, whom they despise in their hearts; they think and say: Poor people do not deserve that I should share my food, drink, or clothing with them; they are tiresome, importunate, shameless, ungrateful, useless people; they are not deserving of help. But, Christians, hear what the Son of God says: "I will have mercy,"[2] even on such poor people. There is not one of them who does not deserve our help and charity. Such is the whole subject of to-day's instruction,—*continues as before.*

SIXTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON THE DECENT POOR.

Subject.

We must especially help the decent poor, according to our means, whenever we can.—*Preached on the eighth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Fodere non valeo, mendicare erubesco. Scio, quid faciam.—Luke xvi. 3, 4.

"To dig I am not able, to beg I am ashamed. I know what I will do."

Introduction.

Unhappy steward, to what a depth of misery you have fallen! Well may you ask, "What shall I do?"[3] To lose one's employment, to have nothing to live upon, to be unable to work for one's

[1] Euntes autem discite, quid est: Misericordiam volo.
[2] Misericordiam volo. [3] Quid faciam?

living, and to be ashamed to beg for it, these, indeed, are circumstances in which there is need of good advice, and which could easily make one despair. I feel sick at heart, when I sometimes think of the miserable condition in which many Christians live nowadays. I mean the decent poor, who are reduced to poverty by misfortune, who cannot work on account of old age, weakness, or sickness, or because they do not know how, and who are unable to continue their business through want of means, while they are ashamed to ask for alms, or to beg their bread, and must cry out with the steward in the Gospel: "What shall I do?"[1] Yet people do not often think of them, because their poverty is little known. Pity for these poor people has induced me to speak in their behalf to-day; for, as St. John Chrysostom says, every preacher and pastor must be a helper and consoler of the poor. I do not wish to take away anything from public beggars, for all deserve Christian charity and beneficence; but because these latter are able to speak for themselves, while the former are afraid to do so, I will try, in this exhortation, to beg some mercy and generosity for the decent poor. I say, therefore—

Plan of Discourse.

We must especially help the decent poor, according to our means, whenever we can, in preference to all others. Such is the whole subject. Towards the end, according to the time I shall have, I intend adding a few words of consolation and advice for such poor people.

Merciful Virgin, Mother of mercy, Mary, obtain from thy Son, for all who are here present, and who can afford to be charitable, a merciful and compassionate heart towards those who complain and lament at home with their children: "To dig I am not able; to beg I am ashamed;"[2] and obtain for the poor people themselves a patient resignation to, and contentment with the will of God! We ask that also of you, oh, holy angels guardian, who take such care of us all!

He who, without suffering any great loss thereby, can help his neighbor who is in grievous want, and who cannot help himself, is bound to do so by the law of God, the law of charity, and the law of nature; and if he refuses to give the necessary help, he commits a sin of cruelty that is condemned by the law of God, the law of charity, and the law of nature. It is useless to

He who can help his neighbor in grievous necessity, without serious loss to himself, is bound to do so.

[1] Quid faciam? [2] Fodere non valeo, mendicare erubesco.

waste time in proving this; the law of God tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves;[1] right reason tells us to do to each one as we should wish him to do to us in the same circumstances, and therefore we must not allow another to suffer a misfortune from which we can free him. For instance, a man falls into the water; although he is an utter stranger to you, you seize hold of him at once to save him from drowning. A child falls down into the mud, and commences to cry; you at once help it to get up, although it be the child of a Turk or a heathen. If you acted otherwise, you would show great cruelty and hard-heartedness. The priest and the Levite who passed by the poor man who was wounded by the robbers—as St. Luke writes, "they saw him and passed by."[2]—were they not as cruel as the robbers themselves? Nay, you are even inclined to pity a dog that is in pain, and to give it relief. So says our Lord also to the Pharisees, in the same Gospel of St. Luke: "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out on the Sabbath day?"[3]

The decent poor are in greater necessity than others.

Ah, my dear brethren, who are they whose cause I am advocating to-day? Are they dogs, or asses, or oxen? Are they heathens or Turks, strangers or foreigners? If they were heathens, or Turks, or foreigners, or even dumb animals, they would have a right to expect a merciful heart and a helpful hand to assist them in the misery in which they cannot help themselves. But they live in the same country, the same town, and profess the same Christian religion that we do; they have been unfortunate; they are reduced to poverty; but they are redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, as well as we. They are poor, but they have the same Father in Heaven that we have. They are poor, but they hope to have the same inheritance as we hope for, from their heavenly Father. They are poor, but they are not on that account of less value than we; perhaps much better and more precious in the sight of God. Now, these people, who are so closely connected with us in many ways, are in want; they are in grievous want, and who can deny it? For, is it not grievous want to be obliged to depend on the mercy of others for the necessities of life, to have hardly bread enough to eat, or to be obliged to eat what one has with bitter sorrow and a sore heart, to be forced to stretch out the hand to implore help from others,

[1] Diliges proximum tuum sicut teipsum.—Matth. xix. 19.

[2] Viso illo præteribant.—Luke x. 31.

[3] Cujus vestrum asinus aut bos in puteum cadet, et non continuo extrahet illum die Sabbati? —Ibid. xiv. 5.

and to beg for alms for God's sake? But, what am I saying? They who can beg publicly and thus help themselves in their poverty, are not so very badly off, after all, although they are miserable enough in the eyes of the world; for it is wisely ordained by the Almighty Creator, that among the different states of life to which men are called, each one can easily adapt himself to the circumstances of the state in which he is born and brought up. Thus, a nobleman does not make himself unhappy because he is not a prince or a king, although he is not so rich as he would be in either of those dignities; a citizen is not dissatisfied because he is not a nobleman; a farmer is satisfied with his farm and his coarse food, and has not the least wish to be a rich merchant. And so it is always, my dear brethren; no sensible person will think himself unhappy because he has not that which he never had, or which is not suitable to his state of life. In the same way, too, they who are born in poverty, can easily endure it, for they are reared in it also; they have received no inheritance from their parents, except the beggar's staff, and they only know how to beg, and nothing more. If one of these gets a piece of bread and meat from a charitable person, he enjoys it just as much as a rich man would a sumptuous repast, and he is surprised at his good fortune; but if you were to ask him to work and earn his bread, he would probably refuse, for he would prefer to idle about the streets and beg from door to door, as is generally the case with street-loiterers. Therefore, I repeat, such people can easily help themselves. But for a man who has been accustomed to better things, who has been brought up respectably, and has hitherto earned his bread by his business, to be reduced to poverty and distress, through a decree of providence, by some unforeseen calamity, by a bad season, or by hard times, that is, indeed, a hard, a bitter trial, such as no public beggar has to bear. There is no doubt that it is a sadder sight to behold Job, who was formerly so rich, reduced to extreme poverty, abandoned by all, and seated on a dunghill; or to see Tobias robbed of his wealth by Sennacherib, and reduced to great want; or Ruth, born of respectable parents, obliged to sustain herself by gleaning corn in the fields; it is a sadder sight, I say, to behold such things, than to see Lazarus, who was always poor, suffering hunger at the rich man's door. Those who are called the decent poor in our days, are in the same sad condition; they have not been born in poverty, but have fallen into it through misfortune; they are as much in want as beggars, but

they are not used to it, nor can they make their wants publicly known. Sometimes they suffer more from hunger than beggars do, and what is worse still, they shrink from telling others of it, and cannot bear to beg for bread, which other poor people do without the least difficulty, or else they venture out furtively to ask for alms, like Nicodemus, who came to see Christ at night, through fear of the Jews, or they make known their misery only to some trusty friend or neighbor. Nay, when something is privately offered to them, they cannot take it without feeling shame and grief. Public beggars shout out their wants in the streets; they exaggerate them sometimes and thus excite people to greater compassion for them; the decent poor, on the contrary, labor and suffer in secret with their children, and receive less help, as their wants are not so well known to others. Oh, certainly, their poverty is greater than any other in the world!

We are, then, specially bound to help them.

Oh, you who are able to help them, surely, if you have human hearts in your bosoms, now is the time for you to prove it! If you have only a spark of Christian charity left, it ought to leap up into a flame, through your intense desire to help these poor people. St. John says: "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him: how doth the charity of God abide in him?"[1] How is it possible for such a man to say that he loves God? Now, if this is to be understood of all who are in need of assistance, how much more is it not true of those who have special claims on your charity and mercy? Oh, law of God, that commandest us to help even our greatest enemies, where art thou? Such is thy command: "If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him water to drink."[2] How strict the obligation thou imposest on us to help our hungry and sorrowing brethren, countrymen, and fellow-citizens, in every possible way! If it is a sin of hard-heartedness to send away empty-handed one who can support himself by begging, what a great sin is it not to refuse help to those who, through shame, cannot do anything for themselves! There is no doubt, my dear brethren, that the greater the want and misery, the greater is our obligation to help him who suffers from it.

According to the example of

It was this thought that in former times moved good people to seek out the decent poor, and to help them privately. It fills

[1] Qui habuerit substantiam hujus mundi, et viderit fratrem suum necessitatem habere et clauserit viscera sua ab eo: quomodo charitas Dei manet in eo? –I. John iii. 17.

[2] Si esurierit inimicus tuus, ciba illum; si sitierit, da ei aquam bibere.—Prov. xxv. 21.

me with pleasure when I read in the Sacred Scriptures how eagerly the Patriarch Abraham invited even strangers to share his hospitality; how he went out to meet them, and asked them to remain with him. He used to say, as if he looked upon it as a great favor: "Lord, if I have found favor in Thy sight, pass not away from Thy servant;"[1] deign to eat and drink with me. Nor do I find it less interesting to read how Booz commanded his reapers to let fall some handfuls of corn on purpose, that the poor widow Ruth might gather them without shame: "And Booz commanded his servants, saying: If she would even reap with you, hinder her not; and let fall some of your handfuls of purpose, and leave them, that she may gather them without shame, and let no man rebuke her when she gathereth them."[2] I rejoice when I read how the holy bishop, St. Nicholas, went to a house by night, and threw in some money through the window for a poor widow and her daughters, who were in want, but were ashamed to beg. I rejoice when I read of Cardinal Bellarmine, who, when he was Archbishop of Capua, kept a list of all who were in debt, and of all ruined families, as well as of other decent poor, that he might be able to act the part of a generous foster-father to them. God Himself has at different times given us an example of this kind of alms-giving. Daniel was for a long time suffering hunger in the lions' den, when God sent an angel who brought the Prophet Habacuc, with food for him, to Babylon. The Prophet Elias was without food in the desert, and God sent him bread by a raven. Why did He not do the same for many others who were in want? Because they could seek food for themselves. Why did He not send the angel at once to Daniel, instead of employing Habacuc, or any other creature? To teach us that we are bound to give alms, and to seek out those who secretly suffer want, and cannot help themselves.

good men in the Old and New Laws.

Ah, my dear brethren, how many decent poor there are nowadays, who would willingly sit down and eat the food prepared for them, if they could only find a charitable Abraham to invite them to do so! How many poor widows, who would glean in the fields, if there was a kind-hearted Booz to allow them! How many poor maidens would save their virtue, if they had a charitable Nicholas to assist them! How many families there are, overwhelmed with debt, who must borrow even their daily

There are few, nowadays, who think of such poor people.

[1] Domine, si inveni gratiam in oculis tuis, ne transeas servum tuum.—Gen. xviii. 3.

[2] Præcepit autem Booz pueris suis, dicens: Etiamsi vobiscum metere voluerit, ne prohibeatis eam; et de vestris quoque manipulis projicite de industria, et remanere permittite, ut absque rubore colligat, et colligentem nemo corripiat.—Ruth ii. 15, 16.

bread, because there is no generous Bellarmine to look after them! In that house there is a Daniel surrounded by his hungry children, and he has no bread to give them; he can answer their cries only with his tears. In that other house an Elias is suffering from hunger and thirst, and can find nothing to eat or drink: would that an angel sent a Habacuc to him with food! But, alas, times are changed, or rather hearts and dispositions are different to what they used to be! It is easy to talk of seeking out the poor, and helping them, so that they may not feel ashamed, and encourage them to make known their wants! They dare not uncover their wounds for fear of being treated as impostors and turned away. There are few who trouble themselves about the welfare of others. Every one thinks he has enough to do to look after himself. "I have found me rest"[1] is what most people think, like the man of whom the Wise Ecclesiasticus speaks: "And now I will eat of my goods alone."[2] But hear what follows: "And he knoweth not what time shall pass, and that death approacheth, and that he must leave all to others, and shall die."[3]

The decent poor suffer from the extravagance of the rich.

But, while some are thus satisfied with their position, because their families are well provided for, their employments are lucrative, and they can live comfortably, there are many who are in the greatest poverty, who have large families and heavy debts, and who could cry out with the sick man, who sat at the pond of Bethsaida, "I have no man;"[4] I have been unfortunate, and have nothing left, no one will look at me now. Now I know the meaning of the saying: "A friend in need is a friend indeed." Formerly, I was able to earn my bread, but now that I am sick, there is no one to take pity on me or help me; no one to visit or console me! While some have everything they require, and are quite content with themselves, there are many unfortunate people who might say with the Prodigal Son: "How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger!"[5] The servants who serve God for temporal gain, have more than they can use; even the wicked are able to spend money on unnecessary things; and I must pine away through want![6] They indulge their ex-

[1] Inveni requiem mihi.—Eccl. xi. 19.

[2] Et nunc manducabo de bonis meis solus.—Ibid.

[3] Et nescit, quod tempus præteriet, et mors appropinquet, et relinquat omnia aliis, et morietur.—Ibid. 20.

[4] Hominem non habeo.—John v. 7.

[5] Quanti mercenarii in domo patris mei abundant panibus: ego autem hic fame pereo!—Luke xv. 17.

[6] Ego autem hic fame pereo!

travagance in dress: they have many articles of clothing that they will never use again, but I have hardly a rag to cover myself! The worms can eat the corn in their granaries, but I have not bread to eat! They have money in their coffers, but I have not a penny! They have costly dishes in abundance, until they turn away from them through sheer disgust, but I can hardly get salt to put in my soup for myself and my children. They can spend a lot of money on parties and entertainments, and would to God that they did not often injure their own souls, and those of others by doing so! They can afford to lose ten or fifteen dollars at play: "But I must pine away through want!"[1] I may sit here and sigh in vain for a penny to buy bread; if I were to make known my misery, they would hardly find a penny to give me, although God has promised them the kingdom of Heaven as a reward for alms-giving! Even their horses and dogs get enough to eat, but I must eat bread (my heart bleeds when I think of it) that many a well-fed dog would refuse to touch.

Who, therefore, must expect severe punishment.

Is it not a shame, my dear brethren (if such is the case, and that is what I do not, and cannot know), for a Christian to spend his money on a thousand vanities, when he knows well, and sees and hears that many of his brethren and sisters have hardly anything to eat, and he is not at all anxious to help them? How the complaints of the poor, who cry to God for vengeance against those hard-hearted people who think only of themselves, must re-echo through the clouds! That is the reason, and I am not surprised at it, that scarcity and want so often afflict whole cities and countries. Therefore, says St. Basil, God does not open His hand to help us, because we close ours against the needy. St. Augustine says: "We are chastised by scarcity, because we do not help the poor."[2] Nor is it any wonder that all our pilgrimages and prayers remain without effect. St. Basil says: "The voice of prayer calls in vain to God, and vanishes into thin air." Why? "Because we do not hear those who ask us for alms."[3] This reason he found in the words of the Holy Ghost: "He that stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself, and shall not be heard."[4] What will such people answer on the day of judgment, when Christ will say to them in an angry

[1] Ego autem hic fame pereo!

[2] Semper flagellamur in frugibus, quia bene egentibus non facimus.

[3] Supplicantium ad Deum vox frustra clamat, et in aëra evanescit. Nam et nos rogantes minime audimus.

[4] Qui obdurat aurem suam ad clamorem pauperis, et ipse clamabit, et non exaudietur.—Prov. xxi. 13.

voice: "I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat"?[1] Their doom is sealed: "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy."[2]

Still more they who persecute and oppress such poor people.

But what will become of those who not only refuse to assist the decent poor, and thus incur guilt enough already, but who are ashamed of them, and turn away their eyes and hearts from them, and do not acknowledge them, simply because they are in poverty and trouble? And, alas, it is only too often the case, nowadays, that such poor citizens, instead of being treated with Christian charity, are only laughed at and ridiculed. The Wise Ecclesiasticus says: "As humility is an abomination to the proud, so also the rich man abhorreth the poor."[3] What will become of those who act, not like the ravens that carried the bread to Elias, but like real carrion birds, and throw themselves ravenously upon the hungry and needy, to take away the bit of bread they have left; who entrap the decent poor, who cannot defend themselves, by all sorts of legal chicanery; who allow them to be defrauded, or neglect their just claims, because they are weak and powerless, or weary them by unnecessary delays in matters of justice; who try to make their profit out of the general misfortune in times of scarcity; who raise the price of provisions, so that many are compelled to sell their little property at a loss, in order to buy food? Such is the way of the world! The little flies are caught by the spiders, while the big ones are safe from them, thus verifying the words of our Lord in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "He that hath not, from him shall be taken away that also which he hath."[4] "Fear and tremble all you who thus take advantage of the poor!"[5] Such is the warning that St. John Chrysostom gives you. For although you have power, money, and influence, yet the poor have much mightier weapons to defend themselves with, namely, their prayers and cries for help.[6] Nor will God forget them, as the Psalmist says: "For requiring their blood, He hath remembered them; He hath not forgotten the cry of the poor."[7] For my part, I certainly should not wish to stand in the place of those hard-hearted people on the last day, for one refusal to give alms in a case of necessity,

[1] Esurivi et non dedistis mihi manducare.—Matth. xxv. 42.
[2] Judicium sine misericordia illi, qui non fecit misericordiam.—James ii. 13.
[3] Sicut abominatio est superbo humilitas, sic et exsecratio divitis pauper.—Eccl. xiii. 24.
[4] Qui autem non habet, et quod habet, auferetur ab eo.—Matth. xiii. 12.
[5] Timete, quicunque pauperes injuria afficitis.
[6] Habent illi arma omnium validissima, luctus et ejulatus.
[7] Quoniam requirens sanguinem eorum recordatus est: non est oblitus clamorem pauperum.—Ps. ix. 13.

brings with it, like a thunderbolt, the sentence: "Depart from me, you cursed."[1] If he, says St. Augustine, is condemned to hell, to whom Christ will say: I was naked, and thou hast not clothed Me,[2] "what place in hell will be kept for him to whom Christ will say: I was clothed and you stripped Me? They who have not clothed the naked shall burn with the devil. But where shall they burn who have plundered widows and orphans?"[3] Oh, what will then be the fate of those wicked husbands, who bring their wives and children to poverty by their intemperance, and who make away with not merely the daily earnings, but even the clothes of their wives (and I know that to be the case) and spend the proceeds in the tavern? Such poor wives and children are all the more to be pitied, since they find so few who will believe and help them, for they are generally treated as impostors when they ask for assistance. Your husband is young and strong, people say to the poor wife; he can support you well enough if he likes. But they never think that it is the young, strong man who has reduced her to want. Alas, we can again say with St. Augustine: "If they who have not clothed the naked, shall burn with the devil, where shall they burn," who plunder their own wives and children, and reduce them to beggary?

Exhortation to all to help the decent poor.

Christians, let us prove that we are children of the Father of mercy, and true followers of Jesus Christ, who had such compassion for the poor! We should make friends of the decent poor especially, according to the divine command in Deuteronomy: "If one of thy brethren that dwelleth within the gates of thy city. . . come to poverty, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor close thy hand, but shalt open it to the poor man. Thou shalt lend him that which thou perceivest he hath need of. Thou shalt give to him, neither shalt thou do anything craftily in relieving his necessities: that the Lord thy God may bless thee at all times, and in all things to which thou shalt put thy hand."[4] But where are we to find those poor people? Ah, that is a question worth asking! If they are ashamed to appear

[1] Discedite a me, maledicti.—Matth. xxv. 42.

[2] Nudus fui et non vestisti me.

[3] Quem locum habebit in igne æterno, cui dicturus est: Vestitus fui et spoliciste me. Cum diabolo ardent, qui nudos non induerunt ubi putamus arsuros, qui viduas et orphanos spoliarunt?

[4] Si unus de fratribus tuis, qui morantur intra portas civitatis tuæ . . .ad paupertatem venerit, non obdurabis cor tuum, nec contrahes manum, sed aperies eam pauperi etc. Dabis ei, nec ages quidquam callide in ejus necessitatibus sublevandis; ut benedicat tibi Dominus Deus tuus in omni tempore, et in cunctis ad quæ manum miseris.—Deut. xv. 7, 8, 10.

in public, yet they are known here and there in your neighborhood. "Want goeth before his face."[1] You can see their poverty in their sunken eyes and pallid faces. And if you really wish to help them, you can find ways and means enough of doing so, either by yourselves, or by means of others. "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor."[2] Why, asks St. Augustine, does the Prophet say "that understandeth"? Why does he not say: Who give to the poor? For this reason, answers the holy Doctor: "That we may give also to those who do not ask,"[3] through shame. That is not true charity that is forced from us by continued asking. Give alms just as God gives them to you every day. The rain falls upon your fields, before even you pray for it. The sun rises, while you are still in bed. The trees bear fruit for you, while you are asleep. Your vineyards produce wine. All the elements help to support you, although you do not think of them. "Blessed is he that understandeth" in the same way, how to give alms to the poor, and to help them, although they do not ask him for help. By giving alms in that way, since such poor people do not appear publicly before your door, like ordinary beggars, you will better fulfil the counsel of Jesus Christ, in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee"[4] a hundred-fold here, and the kingdom of Heaven hereafter. Yes, my heavenly Father, this promise of Thine shall encourage me henceforth to be more generous and charitable to the decent poor, of whom I have hitherto thought so little! Thou hast generously bestowed on me all that I possess. I do not wish to enjoy it alone, but will share it honorably with my poor brethren and sisters. I will help, according to my means, those of whom Thou hast said: "What you have done to the least of these my little ones, you have done to Me." How could I ask Thee with any confidence for my daily bread, if I allowed Thy poor to suffer hunger? Therefore, harden not my heart, but give to me a truly Christian and merciful heart, like to Thine, oh, God! Such should be your resolution, my dear brethren, who can afford to help the poor.

Advice and consolation for the decent poor.

Finally, I address you, poor Christians, whoever you may be, who daily think and say in your secret poverty, with the steward in

[1] Faciem ejus præcedit egestas.—Job xli. 13.

[2] Beatus, qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.—Ps. xl. 2.

[3] Ut et non petentibus detur.

[4] Ut sit eleemosyna tua in abscondito, et Pater tuus, qui videt in abscondito, reddet tibi.—Matth. vi. 4.

the Gospel: "To dig I am not able, to beg I am ashamed."[1] "What shall I do?"[2] I have nothing before me, no help, no resource. Must I despair? God forbid! Must I give vent to my impatience, and murmur against Heaven? Oh, certainly not. What good would that do? Shall I try to help myself by unlawful means? No, that would be a great mistake. "What shall I do?" Shall I call upon God to punish the hard-hearted and wealthy? Shall I curse and revile them? By no means; that would only make matters worse: that would change your temporal misery, by which you can gain Heaven, into an eternal hell, where you would be wretched forever. "I know what I shall do."[3] "Make friends for yourselves."[4] If no one in the world will help you, or be your friend, if all men abandon you, make friends for yourselves in Heaven, by bearing your poverty patiently. Select and keep as your Friend, the good God, to whom the Prophet David says: "To Thee is the poor man left; Thou wilt be a helper to the orphan."[5] Make known your misery to Him; place your whole hope in Him who provides for the ravens, and for the smallest worm. St. Francis of Assisi, when he put on a coarse linen cloak, said: Now I can really say: "Our Father, who art in Heaven."[6] When the same Saint sent any of his brethren to travel, instead of giving them money, he used to tell them to take with them that verse of the Psalm: "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee."[7] "I have been young," are the words of another Psalm, "and now am old; and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread."[8] Have you offended God by sin? If so, your condition is wretched indeed! But you must say with the penitent Prodigal in the Gospel: I know what I will do: I will arise, and by sincere repentance, be converted to my heavenly Father.[9] Are you, as I hope, in the state of grace? Then, for your consolation, remember Him who, as St. Paul says, "Being rich, became poor for your sakes,"[10] your Saviour Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, who bore poverty for thirty-three years, and had not whereon to lay His head. "Let the

[1] Fodere non valeo, mendicare erubesco. [2] Quid faciam? [3] Scio quid faciam.
[4] Facite vobis amicos.
[5] Tibi derelictus est pauper; orphano tu eris adjutor.—Ps. ix. 14.
[6] Pater noster, qui est in cœlis.
[7] Jacta super Dominum curam tuam, et ipse te enutriet.—Ps. liv. 23.
[8] Junior fui, etenim senui; et non vidi justum derelictum, nec semen ejus quærens panem.—Ps. xxxvi. 25.
[9] Surgam, et ibo ad Patrem.—Luke xv. 18.
[10] Propter vos egenus factus est, cum esset dives.—II. Cor. viii. 9.

poor see and rejoice,"[1] that they have as their Companion and Brother in poverty, God Himself, who still suffers hunger and thirst in their persons; for He will say on the last day: "I was hungry."[2] Think every day of what Tobias said to his son: "We lead, indeed, a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good."[3] To you, poor people, I say the same words: Dear children of God, be not troubled nor afraid! It is true that you lead a poor life, but what great riches and treasures you can collect, if you fear God and avoid sin! What riches? All the riches imaginable. Look up to Heaven, and number the stars, if you can; look higher still, if possible: all that, with God Himself, will be your portion forever! You say, we shall have it[4] all hereafter; but now we are in suffering and sorrow. And what does that matter? you shall have it in a very short time. Christ said to His Apostles: "In a little while you shall see Me,"[5] and possess all goods with Me. If, then, you have God as your Friend, what more do you want? St. Augustine asks: "What has the rich man, if he has not God: and what does the poor man want who has God?"[6] Let this thought, beloved children of God, encourage you to be patient and resigned; let your prayer be, every morning when you renew your good intention: Behold, O God, I offer Thee myself and my whole family; Thy decrees are always just, no matter what Thou commandest; I give myself completely to Thy holy will. Thou hast given me temporal goods, Thou hast taken them away from me; may Thy Name be always blessed! I must endure hunger and sorrow: may Thy holy will be done, O Lord! I will not, therefore, cease to love, praise, and bless Thee, O God of infinite goodness! Dost Thou wish me to be poorer still? Behold, I am in Thy hands: do with me as Thou wilt, but fulfil what Thou hast promised me hereafter. It is in Heaven that I expect my reward, my satisfaction, my eternal joy. Oh, happy poor, if you thus speak, think, and act! Oh, wealthy poverty! Oh, sorrow full of consolation! Oh, want full of sweetness! That is how you should act. Amen.

[1] Videant pauperes et lætentur.—Ps. lxviii. 33.

[2] Esurivi.

[3] Pauperem quidem vitam gerimus, sed multa bona habebimus, si timuerimus Deum, et recesserimus ab omni peccato, et fecerimus bene.—Tob. iv. 23.

[4] Habebimus.

[5] Modicum, et videbitis me.—John xvi. 16.

[6] Quid habet dives, si Deum non habet, quid non habet pauper, si Deum habet?

Another Introduction for the Fifth Sunday in Lent.

Text.

Quis ex vobis arguet me de peccato?—John viii. 46.
"Which of you shall convince Me of sin?"

Christ could say that with all truth, in spite of the envious Pharisees, who eagerly watched everything He did, and put a bad interpretation upon it: "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?"[1] So also think and say, but falsely, many wealthy Christians, nowadays, who seldom or never perform any of the works of Christian charity and mercy. Who will, or can accuse me of sin, they say, because I enjoy my goods alone, and give little or no alms? I want what I have for myself; I have no superfluous wealth; beggars are idle, deceitful, thankless, and often wicked people; I am not bound under pain of sin to help them, etc. My dear brethren, I have proved, during Lent, that these excuses are invalid, and shown, first, that each one is bound to give alms according to his means; secondly, that many could afford to give alms, if they lived according to the rules of Christian moderation, and therefore are not to be excused from the sin of hard-heartedness; thirdly, that all the poor, no matter who they are, are well deserving of being helped, according to one's means, because it is Jesus Christ Himself who asks alms in their persons. But if, in spite of that, there are some who still think that public beggars have no claim on their charity, I will prove to them to-day that there are other poor who certainly deserve alms, and that they who refuse alms to them, are evidently guilty of sin. And what poor are they? I mean the decent poor, etc.—*continues as before.*

[1] Qui ex vobis arguet me de peccato?

SIXTY-FOURTH SERMON.

ON THE HAPPINESS OF THE POOR.

Subject.

1st. The poor, when they are satisfied with the will of God, are better off, and happier in this life, than the rich. 2d. They are more certain of eternal happiness in the next life, than the rich.—*Preached on the eighth Sunday after Pentecost.*

Text.

Quid faciam? Fodere non valeo, mendicare erubesco.—Luke xvi. 3.

"What shall I do? To dig I am not able, to beg I am ashamed."

Introduction.

The merciful Saviour said: "I have compassion on the multitude,"[1] for they have had nothing to eat for three days. "I have compassion on the multitude," I must also say, when I think of how many poor beggars there are, and especially of the number of decent poor, who, on account of their former respectability, could easily say with the steward in the Gospel: "To dig" and labor "I am not able, to beg" publicly "I am ashamed."[2] "What shall I do?"[3] What hope is there for me? And they are just as badly off who have to work hard every day, and still can barely get bread enough for themselves and their children. Thus, since the decent poor feel their poverty more than public beggars, they are more deserving of pity. "What shall I do?" I have often advocated their cause already by trying to exhort and encourage others to be generous to them. Whether I have succeeded, or to speak better, whether I have touched the hearts of the rich, or not, I cannot say; all I know is, that my intention was good. But now the poor expect an alms from me, and I acknowledge my debt; I have prom-

[1] Misereor super turbam.—Mark viii. 2.
[2] Fodere non valeo, mendicare erubesco. [3] Quid faciam.

ised it to them. Therefore, hold out, not your hands, but your ears and your hearts! For if you come to me with outstretched hands, I can only answer you as St. Peter answered the lame man at the gate of the temple: "Silver and gold I have none; but what I have, I give thee."[1] Ye poor of Jesus Christ, do not expect money from me, because I have not a penny; but what I have, and can share with you, I am ready to give you, namely, spiritual consolation in your necessities. You ask, "What shall I do?"[2] I will tell you what to do. Be satisfied with the will and decree of God; hope and trust in Him, and you will be better off and happier in your poverty, than if you were rich. As I shall now show for your consolation.

Plan of Discourse.

You are better off, and happier in this life, than the rich. That I will prove in the first part, which will also be the longer, since it requires more proof. You are more certain of eternal happiness in the next life, as I shall prove in the second part. The rich will also hear something for themselves; the others can easily apply what they hear to their difficulties and trials.

Jesus Christ, Father, Companion, and King of the poor, give to all those from whom, in Thy all-wise providence, Thou hast taken away the goods of this world, or to whom Thou hast dealt them out sparingly, the consolation of Thy Holy Spirit, and the grace to serve Thee faithfully, and to be satisfied with Thy will. This we ask of Thee, through Thy Mother Mary, and our holy angels guardian.

The poor, although they appear miserable, can be happy.

A poor citizen who has hardly bread enough for his children, a poor laborer who must work the whole day and still suffer hunger, a poor beggar who must go from door to door on the public streets to look for a piece of bread, are all better off and happier here on earth than a rich man who has everything in abundance. What a strange, incomprehensible thing to say! Who can believe it? What do you rich people think of it? Is it true? But I need not ask you that question; you would laugh at me, and it would be with me, as it was formerly with my Lord and Saviour, when He preached to the Pharisees on the happiness of the poor. "Now the Pharisees who were

[1] Argentum et aurum non est mihi: quod autem habeo, hoc tibi do.—Acts iii. 6.
[2] Quid faciam?

covetous, heard all these things, and they derided Him."[1] Ye poor and needy, what do you think of it? You will perhaps answer me with sighs and tears: Ah, God help us, what a miserable happiness ours is! Still, I maintain what I have said, and you, if you wish, can experience this happiness.

If they only serve God, and are satisfied with His will.

I admit that all the poor have not the happiness of which I speak. There are different kinds of poverty, says Hugo de Sancto Victore; there is a pretended poverty, a burdensome poverty, a useless poverty, a wicked poverty, and a holy poverty. A pretended, or false poverty is that of those hypocrites, or lazy people who merely pretend to be poor, or who exaggerate their poverty; or who, although they could earn their bread honestly, prefer to loiter about the streets, and take the bread out of the mouths of those who are really poor. A burdensome poverty is that of those who bear want unwillingly, and try to raise themselves from their lowly state by every means, lawful and unlawful. A useless poverty is that of most people who bear want like hungry animals, without any good intention or supernatural end, and without considering the will of God; they bear it simply because they cannot help themselves, so that they gain nothing by it for eternity. A wicked poverty is the worst of all, and it is that of those who lead impious and reckless lives in want and misery, who murmur against God and His providence, who curse the rich when the latter give them nothing, who sometimes barter their purity for the sake of a little gain, and thus make their beggar's staff a ladder by which to descend into hell, to suffer eternal hunger and thirst. All these are excluded from the happiness of which I now speak, although all could enjoy it if they wished. A holy poverty, and would to God that it were more general, is that of the just who are satisfied with the will of God, put their confidence in Him, and with holy Job, never cease to bless Him. It is of these alone that I speak, and I say that they are far happier than the rich ones of the world.

For earthly happiness consists in a peaceful and contented disposition.

For, to understand the matter properly, in what does earthly happiness consist? In the possession of wealth and riches? In being honored by others? In a luxurious and easy life? In eating, drinking, and sleeping? In spending the time in idle amusements? Is it in those things, I ask, that happiness consists? If so, then the consolation I have promised will come to nothing, and the best thing for me to do would be to hold my tongue and

[1] Audiebant autem omnia hæc Pharisæi, qui erant avari, et deridebant illum.—Luke xvi. 14.

go home; for all my preaching will not bring these things into the houses of the poor. In what consists, then, true happiness, which is a Heaven on earth? I will not answer, but I will let those do it whom you must believe, unless you wish to accuse God Himself of an untruth. The great Apostle St. Paul, writing to the Romans, says: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."[1] In the first place, then, besides the state of grace and the friendship of God, without which there can be no true happiness, the kingdom of God consists in peace and contentment of mind. What good is it to me to possess money in my coffers, corn in my granaries, wine in my cellar, and rich lands, if I am at war with myself, disturbed, disquieted, and anxious in mind? A piece of dry bread, with a contented mind, is better than the most costly fare with trouble and anxiety.

The pious poor enjoy that peace.

Who enjoys that peace of mind? Is it he who has many cares and occupations, who has much to fear, much to hope for, much to guard against, much to desire, much that he is still in want of, much that he can lose any day, much that he is always in danger of having to leave, to his great sorrow, and who is therefore a servant and a slave to countless agitations and desires? Or is it he who is free from cares and occupations of all kinds, who need fear only God, who has nothing to hope for but Heaven, nothing to avoid but sin, nothing to desire but his salvation, nothing to lose but his life, nothing to leave but this vale of tears, and who is, therefore, lord and master over himself? No doubt the latter is far better off and more at peace than the former. But that is the case with every poor citizen, poor widow, or poor beggar, who is content with the decree of God's providence and is resigned to the divine will. Thieves and robbers, go to them; they are not afraid of you, you can take little or nothing from them. Misfortune, losses, and bankruptcy, they care not for you, because you cannot make them poorer. War, devastation, shipwreck, bad seasons, you do not trouble them, for you cannot injure their lands and possessions, since they have none. Lawsuits and debts, you cannot take away their peace of mind, nor break their night's rest, for they know nothing about you; they have nothing to go to law about, nothing on which they can borrow money; or if they have formerly contracted just debts, without any fault of their own, they leave the payment of them to

[1] Non est enim regnum Dei esca et potus, sed justitia, et pax, et gaudium in Spiritu sancto.—Rom. xiv. 17.

their heavenly Father, whose providence has either taken from them what they had, or given them nothing, for no one has a right to claim anything from him who has nothing, nor would law or violence help such a claim. Finally, they need not have much fear of death, because it can take nothing from them, nor can it do anything to them beyond placing their souls in the possession of eternal goods.

On the other hand, the rich are always uneasy.

The rich man, on the contrary, is tormented every day with a thousand cares, troubles, fears, and anxieties, in his efforts to keep his wealth and position, to leave his children well off, to avoid being deceived and robbed by others, to prevent his own servants from being unfaithful to him, to collect his yearly rents and income, to carry on his business to advantage, to secure success in his law-suits, to cultivate his fields and vineyards properly, to protect them from bad weather, and to gather in his crops in due time. These cares, and countless similar ones, unceasingly torment the rich man, so that he is more like a prisoner and a slave than a free owner of his property,[1] as St. Cyprian says; therefore, the Prophet David calls the rich, "men of riches, to show that they do not possess their riches, but are possessed by them,"[2] as St. Ambrose explains the words. Even heathen philosophers know that much, for many of them renounced all they had so as to live without care, and be better able to devote themselves to study. Crates was once left a large property by a friend, but he immediately gave it away, saying: "Crates has to-day set himself free."[3] Another poor philosopher had received five talents in gold from Policrates; the good man thought he was the happiest person in the world, since he had so much money. Away, he said, away with beggarly philosophy! it is not profitable; I will traffic my money and make more. He went to a merchant to learn business, and considered for a time in what way he could best invest his money. He spent the whole day and a good part of the night thinking of it; he even dreamed of it, and was disturbed in his sleep by it. After some time had elapsed in this way, he began to think that he had enough of it. From the moment the money came into my house, he said to himself, I have not had any peace. Good-bye, then, to business; the best business for me is to have nothing and to enjoy my usual peace of mind. Full of this resolve, he brought back the money to Policrates, and said to him:

[1] Pecuniæ tuæ captivus es.
[2] Viri divitiarum, ut ostenderet eos non possessores divitiarum, sed a suis divitiis possideri.
[3] Crates Cratem hodie libertate donat.

"I hate the gift that robs me of my night's rest."[1] When Diogenes once saw, in the market-place, a quantity of costly merchandise and a number of people who were engaged in traffic, "O," he exclaimed with joy, "how many things there are that I can do without!"[2] How hard it is for people to have to occupy themselves with so many different things! Poor Christians, how much greater reason have you not to boast of the freedom that you can enjoy in holy poverty, without any trouble!

The poor are better off than the rich, even as far as comfort is concerned.

Yes, you say, but what a miserable freedom it is, when people have hardly enough to support life! That is true; but if they are content with the little they have, they live from day to day, according to the counsel of Jesus Christ, and do not trouble about the morrow; they rely on the care and goodness of their heavenly Father, who provides for all, and who will not let them perish with hunger; even if He did so, their lives are in the hands of God, who gave them life. But they have not the comforts, pleasures, and joys of life, like the rich. What comforts and pleasures? Happiness does not consist in such things, as we have seen already. Yet, let us see which have the greater comfort, the rich or the poor. The comforts you speak of, that the rich man can enjoy, consist in having a fine house, in eating, drinking, and sleeping well. Is not that so? For I do not wish to speak of impure pleasures. Now, I can say with St. John Chrysostom, that the poor man who is content with his lot has a more comfortable dwelling, more comfortable clothing, and eats, drinks, and sleeps better than the rich man. The Saint says: "Do not wonder at what I say,"[3] for I will prove it to you. Let us go into the house of a rich man; everything in it is most luxurious; there are many rooms in the first, second, and third stories; there are ante-chambers, parlors, dining-rooms, studies, bed-rooms; rooms for the master and for the mistress, for the children, for the servants, and for guests; most of them are adorned with costly hangings and with works of art, while the chairs are richly covered, and the sideboards glitter with plate. Let us go now into the house of a poor man; it is a very small place, in which, besides his empty kitchen, he has barely room to remain with his family during the day, and to sleep at night; or we may find him in a strange house, occupying one miserable room. There is certainly a great difference between the two; I am astonished at the pomp and magnificence of the rich

[1] Odi munus, quod me vigilare cogit. [2] O! quantis non indigeo!
[3] Ne miremini dictum!

man, and at first sight, I am inclined to pity the poor man; but after all, which of the two has the greater comfort in his house, the rich man with his suites of rooms, or the poor man with his one room? Now, it is quite certain that the former cannot occupy more than one room at a time, and that he can only be in one part of it at a time; is he, then, so much better off than the other, who can occupy just as much space in his little room? If the former wishes to use all his rooms, he must go from one to the other; the latter need not do that, and can content himself where he is, with his work; and he is just as comfortable as the other, for he has space enough to rest himself in. The whole difference between the two is this: the rich man must go to a great deal of expense to keep his house in proper order; he must employ upholsterers to look after the furniture; men and maid-servants to clean the rooms; nay, he must be careful, when he comes in from the muddy street, to clean his shoes, so as not to soil the carpets; the poor man, on the contrary, is free from all these cares, and can go in and out, how and when he pleases. Is he not much better off than the other?

In their clothing.

Let us now consider their relative positions, as far as clothing is concerned. A rich lady wishes to go out to walk, or to Church. What a long time she takes to get ready! Why so? Because she must dress in the latest fashion, according to her position: otherwise, she would not appear in public; and a great deal of time and trouble is required for that. Her dress has to be prepared, her hair has to be combed and curled, the glass must be consulted twenty times, before she can get her head-gear into proper order, lace has to be pinned on here and there, ribbons must be adjusted, flounces have to be put on, one over the other, and puffed out; hours are required to do the whole thing properly, so that she has to lose Mass very often on week-days, on account of the length of time she takes to dress. But supposing that she is at last decked out in the height of fashion; do you think she feels very comfortable in that pompous array? No chance of it! She has to turn first one way and then the other, before taking a seat in Church, or she will spoil all her finery! Fine ladies are bound to admit that their elegant dresses are most uncomfortable, and that as soon as they go home, they are glad enough to take them off, so as to be able to move about and sit down at their ease. How much better off and more comfortable is the wife of the poor citizen, in this respect! During the time you would take to say one or two Our Fathers, she has

put on her hat, and jacket, and dress, and is ready to start. Judge from that, my dear brethren, which of the two enjoys the greater convenience in dress, the rich or the poor.

And as far as enjoyment in eating and drinking and sleeping is concerned.

With regard to enjoyment in eating and drinking, you must admit that a large table, laden with silver plate and cut glass, and costly food and drink, does not constitute pleasure, but rather that a good appetite and a healthy stomach are the first requisites. You may sit down at a princely table, and have thirty different kinds of meats brought to you; if you are suffering from fever, or have no appetite, what pleasure will you have? No cook can prepare food half so well as hunger and a good appetite. Look at the poor man enjoying his bread and cheese; it tastes sweeter to him than all your partridges and field-hares do to you, who do not know what to eat first, you have so much to choose from. Artaxerxes, King of Assyria, after losing a battle, was obliged to take refuge in a peasant's hut; he was very hungry, and was glad to get some barley-bread to eat, and water to drink. He liked it so well, that he began to complain of his gods for having kept such delicious food a secret from him. You must acknowledge, too, that it is not a grand bed, with soft pillows, that makes one enjoy a comfortable sleep, but the fatigue of the body, an undisturbed imagination, and calm repose. How the poor man who has to work hard all day to get bread for himself and his children, enjoys his night's rest! He finds his handful of straw more comfortable, especially if he has a good conscience for a pillow, than the rich man, with all his money, with an overloaded stomach and a head full of cares, finds his bed of down; and while the former sleeps the whole night through, the latter awakes twenty times, and turns uneasily from one side to the other. But these are only pleasures that men enjoy in common with the brute beasts.

They are much better off as regards spiritual consolations.

There is a spiritual, supernatural, and much greater joy that the poorest man, who is in the state of grace, can have in this life, and it is that which St. Paul calls true happiness, nay, even Heaven on earth; "joy in the Holy Ghost."[1] How so? The blind Tobias said to the disguised angel Raphael, when the latter wished him joy: "What manner of joy shall be to me, who sit in darkness, and see not the light of Heaven?"[2] A poor man or woman could ask: What joy can I have in the Holy Ghost?[3]

[1] Gaudium in Spiritu sancto.—Rom. xiv. 17.
[2] Quale gaudium mihi erit, qui in tenebris sedeo, et lumen cœli non video?—Tob. v. 12.
[3] Quale gaudium mihi erit?

for I am in the greatest want, and have not even the necessities of life.

It is a comfort for a servant to suffer want with his king.

Listen: if in escaping from some danger, or on account of some sudden necessity, a servant were obliged to take refuge with his king, in a peasant's hut, and to be satisfied with barley-bread and water, and to sleep on the bare ground, would it not be a consolation and joy to him, although he suffers from want? Nay, he would be more delighted to be the companion of his king in such circumstances, for a short time, than if he could sit with him at the royal table in the palace, because he could boast ever after that he had shared want as well as abundance with his master. But he is badly off all the same. No matter; the king, he would think, is much greater than I, and he is no better off than I am. It is a certain fact, that there have been servants who pretended to be lame, or who even plucked out an eye, in order to be more like their lame or one-eyed master.

It is a still greater joy and consolation for a poor man to know that he is in the same state as Christ.

If the example of a mortal prince, whose favor is changeable and deceitful, can do so much, what cannot be expected from faithful servants and hand-maids of God, when they consider that, in their poverty, they are companions of Jesus Christ, the Eternal King of Heaven? Nay, when they remember that their King had much less during His life, although He is Lord of all, than they His servants have? St. Paul says, for the consolation of poor people: "Being rich, He became poor for your sakes."[1] What joy and consolation for a soul that loves God, to think: I was born of poor parents, my brothers and sisters are poor, my wife and children are poor; but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was even worse off than I am! His Mother was a poor virgin, His foster-father was a poor working-man. His companions were fishermen, His dearest friends were the poor, the sick, and the oppressed! I dwell in a small and miserable house: Jesus Christ had not even a house that He could call His own; He was born in a stable; He had to take refuge with strangers in Egypt; He lived in a small house at Nazareth; when He went to preach the Gospel, He had to pass the night in the open air, unless some one, through charity, offered Him shelter! I have no money, but Christ, my Lord, had not even enough to pay the tribute! I must earn my bread by working or by begging, and Christ, my Lord, had to work also for His daily bread? I have no landed property: Christ, the Lord of the world, had not even a foot of ground in His own dominions! I am clad in old, worn-out

[1] Propter vos egenus factus est, cum esset dives.—II. Cor. viii. 9.

clothes: Christ, my Lord and my King, was not dressed any better! The garment that His mother made for Him, when He was a child, grew, by a continued miracle, with Him, and He never wore any other! I sometimes suffer hunger and thirst: Christ, my Lord, had the same experience! I live on alms, and am supported by the charity of others: Christ and His Apostles had to do the same, so that the latter were often obliged to pluck ears of corn to eat! I must sometimes complain of being in want: Christ has had to do that also! I sleep on straw: Christ had not even whereon to lay His sacred head! I am despised and looked down upon by all: it was foretold of Christ, that He would be, "the most abject of men;"[1] "the reproach of men and the outcast of the people."[2] I will have nothing to leave my children when I die: Christ had not even a thread of His garment to leave to His mother, and He was buried in a grave that belonged to a stranger! So that in my poverty, I am a companion and a living image of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,[3] as St. Clement of Alexandria says of the patient poor. Have I not, therefore, reason to be satisfied? Should I not rejoice with all my heart that I have the happiness of being poor with Christ? "The servant is not greater than his master,"[4] says our Lord Himself, and he should be satisfied to be as his master is.

Therefore, so many chose voluntary poverty.

It was this thought, my dear brethren, that filled convents and deserts with those who proposed voluntary poverty; it was this thought that drove countless numbers of people to leave all they had, that they might share in the poverty of Jesus Christ. They think themselves rich enough, says St. Jerome, as long as they are poor with Christ.[5] It was this thought that made our forefathers, the first Christians, sell their houses and lands, and lay the money at the feet of the Apostles, so that no one might have anything of his own, after choosing the poor Christ as his Head, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles. It is the same thought that makes pious souls nowadays think themselves happy on account of their poverty, esteem themselves unworthy of so great a grace, and pray earnestly that God would keep them in the poor and lowly condition in which He was pleased to live on earth; and that I have often heard myself, to my great consolation.

[1] Novissimus virorum.—Isai. liii. 3.
[2] Opprobrium hominum, et abjectio plebis.—Ps. xxi. 7.
[3] Nudam Dei imaginem.
[4] Non est servus major domino suo.—John xv. 20.
[5] Affatim dives est, qui cum Christo pauper est.

Therefore, the poor are happier than the rich in this life.

See, now; who could imagine that in a state which almost all men look upon with horror, which is avoided as the greatest evil of life, which excites the compassion and pity of all, there could be such great happiness and contentment? This is, indeed, strange and unintelligible to the children of the world; but it is what Christ, the Infallible Truth, who cannot judge of a thing otherwise than as it really is, publicly proclaims, when He places the poor in spirit, that is, those who embrace voluntary poverty, or who bear compulsory poverty with resignation, first amongst the blessed: "Blessed are the poor in spirit."[1] That is what you, poor and needy Christians, could really experience if you are only satisfied with the will and decree of God. Rejoice, then, in your poor, but peaceful and happy state on earth! And rejoice much more at your future happiness in the next life, of which you hold a much surer pledge than the rich ones of this world; as I shall briefly prove in the

Second Part.

No one can go to Heaven who is not like Christ.

I find that I have already partly proved what I am now about to establish; for it is true, and it is so infallibly, that, as St. Paul says, no one can enter Heaven, unless he is conformable to the image of the Son of God: "Whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son;"[2] if, I say, that is so, who must not admit that there is more of the image of the poor Christ in the poor, than in the rich? Therefore, if a poor man is satisfied with his condition, who will not say that he is surer of Heaven than the rich man? You are frightened and shocked at this, you wealthy people! And you have good reason, too, if one thing is wanting to you! Not in vain has the meek Saviour threatened that woe: "Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation. Woe to you that are filled, for you shall hunger."[3] Not in vain has He declared in the Gospel of St. Matthew, that it is so difficult for the rich to enter Heaven: "Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of Heaven. And again I say to you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven."[4] Oh, my God,

[1] Beati pauperes spiritu.—Matth. v. 3.

[2] Quos præscivit et prædestinavit, conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui.—Rom. viii. 29.

[3] Væ vobis divitibus, quia habetis consolationem vestram. Væ vobis, qui saturati estis, quia esurietis.—Luke vi. 24, 25.

[4] Amen, dico vobis: quia dives difficile intrabit in regnum cœlorum. Et iterum dico vobis: Facilius est camelum per foramen acus transire, quam divitem intrare in regnum cœlorum.—Matth. xix. 23, 24.

why art Thou so severe? Are riches, then, bad in themselves? No; but they are bad in the evil effects that easily follow from them, when they once get possession of the human heart. Therefore, I say, you have reason to fear, if one thing is wanting to you, namely, detachment from your riches, which is absolutely necessary to prevent your having an inordinate desire for them. You must receive them from the hand of God with gratitude and humility; you must use them with Christian moderation, and in doing good works to the glory of God, and, if they are taken away from you, either in part or altogether, you must be satisfied, and thus be poor, at least in spirit, so as to resemble our poor Saviour.

That is very hard for the rich; very easy for the poor.

But what a rare and difficult thing it is thus to detach one's heart and affections from the money and property that one possesses in abundance, that one sees and touches and tries to increase daily! This is the chief reason why riches are to be dreaded, because, as St. Bernard says: "They seldom or never can be possessed without the heart being attached to them."[1] What little difficulty you have in this respect, poor Christians! How much easier it is to keep the heart and affections free from what one has not, and cannot hope to have! You very seldom desire great or abundant wealth, but merely what is necessary to support life. You are quite prepared to do as St. Paul says: "But having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content,"[2] we ask for nothing more. Is not that so?

The narrow way leads to Heaven; hard for the rich to find it.

Again, if the right way to Heaven is that alone of which Christ speaks in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "How narrow is the gate, and straight is the way that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it!"[3] and if the only way to hell is that of which Christ speaks in the same place: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat,"[4] you can judge for yourselves which of the two is more likely to find the way to Heaven, the rich man in luxury, or the poor man in want. I do not deny that many who were rich in this life, are now happy with God in Heaven. I admit, too, that here below, thanks be to God, there are many wealthy people who are zealous, pious, and edifying Christians;

[1] Vix aut nunquam sine amore valeant possideri.

[2] Habentes autem alimenta, et quibus tegamur, his contenti sumus.—I. Tim. vi. 8.

[3] Quam angusta porta, et arcta via est, quæ ducit ad vitam: et pauci sunt, qui inveniunt eam!—Matth. vii. 14.

[4] Lata porta, et spatiosa via est, quæ ducit ad perditionem, et multi sunt, qui intrant per eam.—Ibid. 13.

nor can I say that all poor people go to Heaven. No, my dear brethren, eternal perdition is not a necessary consequence of riches, nor does eternal salvation follow necessarily on poverty: but we must acknowledge that the former have more opportunities of sin and incur more dangers of losing Heaven, than the latter. "All things obey money,"[1] says the Wise Man. He who is wealthy can satisfy all the evil desires of nature, and he would require a wonderful grace to refrain from doing so. Wealth is an incitement to nearly every vice; to pride and contempt of the poor, to avarice and an insatiable thirst for money, to sensuality and impurity, to envy and jealousy towards those who hold high places, to gluttony and intemperance, to anger and vindictiveness against those from whom one has suffered insult or injury, and to laziness and sloth in the service of God. How are those vices encouraged, nay, kept up and supported, if not by wealth? The Apostle says: "They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil. For the desire of money is the root of all evils."[2] Pluck up this root, take away the opportunities of doing evil, and the above-mentioned vices, like trees without roots, will soon decay.

The poor who are contented with the divine will, are on the right way to Heaven.

You, poor Christians, are taken away from the most of these dangers and temptations. The greatest and almost the only temptations your poverty can cause you, are discontent, impatience, cursing, blasphemy, despair, theft. But you can easily avoid all these, if, being in the state of grace, you are content with the divine will and decree, for then you go direct on the road marked out for you by the footsteps of your Saviour, on the road that leads to Heaven. You resemble the dove that Noe sent out of the ark, which, "not finding where her foot might rest, returned to him into the ark."[3] The raven, on the contrary, did not come back, because it found sufficient food in the decaying carcasses that were floating about. This raven is a figure of the rich, who seek their pleasure and repose in carrion, that is, in the perishable things of this world, and who have, therefore, little desire to enter into the heavenly ark. But you, whose hearts and hopes cannot be fixed upon transitory things, which have either never been given to you, or have been taken away from you, and who consequently can find no resting place

[1] Pecuniæ obediunt omnia.—Eccles. x. 19.

[2] Qui volunt divites fieri, incidunt in tentationem et in laqueum diaboli. Radix enim omnium malorum est cupiditas.—I. Tim. vi. 9, 10.

[3] Cum non invenisset, ubi requiesceret pes ejus, reversa est ad eum in arcam.—Gen. viii. 9.

on this earth, what else can and must you do but strive with all your hearts for Heaven? Here in this life, where the rich hold their feasts and banquets, there is no place prepared for you. You must stand at the door, and be content to beg for what falls from their tables. But in the heavenly banquet, you will be preferred before many mighty lords and great ones of the earth. You will be seated in the first places, and will enjoy yourselves for all eternity.

Nay, they are assured of Heaven.

But what am I saying? You hold a sure pledge of eternal happiness in your hands. Not I, but Christ Himself tells you that, in the words already quoted: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."[1] And again in the Gospel of St. Luke: "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." St. Bernard makes a beautiful remark upon these words: the reward, he says, is promised only in the future for all the other beatitudes. "Blessed are the meek; for they shall possess the land.[2] Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.[3] Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God.[4] Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God.[5] Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall have their fill.[6] Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."[7] Mark these words, my dear brethren, they *will have* such and such a reward. But the poor in spirit, that is, the poor who are resigned to the will of God, and those who suffer persecution for God's sake, are the only ones of whom it is said: "Theirs *is* the kingdom of Heaven;"[8] not merely *will be*, but *is*. Rejoice, then, ye fortunate poor, "for yours is the kingdom of God!"[9] St. Bernard says: "The kingdom of Heaven is not merely promised, but is actually given to the poor."[10] Not, indeed, as if they were already in Heaven, for they know the contrary to be the case, but to show them that they can be certain of going there. Now I can understand more clearly the text of to-day's Gospel: "Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity."[11] That is, according to the general interpretation, make friends of the poor by generous alms-giving, "that when you shall fail they may re-

[1] Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum cœlorum.—Matth. v. 3.
[2] Beati mites, quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram.—Ibid. 4.
[3] Quoniam ipsi consolabantur. [4] Quoniam ipsi Deum videbant.
[5] Quoniam filii Dei vocabantur. [6] Quoniam ipsi saturabuntur.
[7] Quoniam misericordiam consequentur.
[8] Ipsorum est regnum cœlorum. [9] Quoniam vestrum est regnum Dei.
[10] Regnum cœlorum pauperibus non tam promittitur, quam datur.
[11] Facite vobis amico de mammona iniquitatis.

ceive you into everlasting dwellings."[1] But how, I would otherwise think, how, O Lord, can the poor receive me into a Heaven that they do not yet possess? Art not Thou the only Lord and Giver of glory? Certainly, it seems to me that the Almighty answers: the poor can receive you, if they are resigned, because I have already raised them to that dignity, so that by their prayers, and by the alms they receive that appeal to Me, they can bring their benefactors and supporters to Heaven, even while they are still on earth, for, "theirs is already the kingdom of Heaven."[2]

Conclusion and consoling exhortation to the poor.

Hear this, ye poor of Jesus Christ, and be comforted! Never say again that you are wretched and unhappy! Can there be any greater happiness than yours? If the rich ones of the world only understood the things of eternity, they might easily envy you. If they do not envy you now, the time will come when many of them will wish they had been as poor as you are; the time will come when you can laugh at all the rich people of the world; the time when you and they will go together into eternity; they, stripped of all their possessions, poor and naked, you, rich in your souls, without any fear of being robbed. Imagine that you see a merchant who is coming home from a foreign land: he ties up the money he has gained in a bag, and puts it behind him on his horse, but the constant shaking tears the bag and makes a hole in it. The merchant travels on contentedly, suspecting nothing, and meanwhile all the money falls out, little by little, on the road. Strangers who are going the same way, pick up the money and become rich. But the poor merchant, when he arrives home, and opens his bag, finds, too late, that all his money is gone. And so it is during this life: we are all travellers; our true home is eternity, according to the words: "Man shall go into the house of his eternity."[3] There our bundles shall be opened, at the words: "Behold the man and his works."[4] Oh, how many rich people will then find a large hole in their bags, through which, during their journey on earth, all their treasures and riches have fallen out and been lost, because they did not use them for the good of their souls; while others who come after them, that is, their children and heirs, collect their riches and make merry with them, but they themselves are sent poor and naked into eternal misery! But you, poor Christians,

[1] Ut, cum defeceritis, recipiant vos in æterna tabernacula.
[2] Ipsorum est regnum cœlorum.
[3] Ibit homo in domum æternitatis suæ.—Eccles. xii. 5.
[4] Ecce homo, et opera ejus.

who are patient and resigned, how rich and wealthy you will be, when you enter into Heaven to rejoice eternally with all the treasures you have collected during life by your virtues and good works. There have been crowned heads that have understood this truth at the hour of death. Charles, King of Sicily, gives us an example of that: When he was on his death-bed, he sighed: "How vain are the thoughts of men! What good is my kingdom to me now? How much better it would be for me now, if I had been a poor man, and not a king!"[1] John, King of Arragon, said the same thing when he was about to die: "Oh, happy state of the poor, and certain and happy life of those who live by the sweat of their brow, and the labor of their hands! What better am I, wretched man that I am, for my kingdom, my honors, and my many servants? What have they all done, but to expose me to many dangers of soul and body? In the many years of my life, I have hardly had one happy day! Ah, wretched and unhappy me, who see the vanity of the world, now when it is too late! How much better I might have lived, if I had been a poor plough-man, and not a king!"[2] His brother Alphonsus, King of Naples, as history tells us, left this life with the same wish and the same regret. Philip the Third, King of Spain, although he led an innocent, pious, and holy life, said on his death-bed: "Would that I had never been a king! Would that I had spent the years that I have passed in my kingdom, as a private man serving God in the desert! With what certainty I would now die! How confidently I could appear before the judgment-seat of God!"[3] You, oh, poor, need not form such wishes on your death-beds, for you are now what you would then wish to have been. Ah, may God keep you from being so foolish as to abandon Him, and live in sin! If you did that, you would have a hell both here and hereafter. The only thing that you should fear and avoid is to make God your enemy. The only object of all your cares should be to keep Him as your Friend, and to be resigned to His will: if you do so, I tell you again, you are sure of Heaven. Say, therefore, every day, when making

[1] O vanas hominum cogitationes! quid mihi jam regnum prodest? Quam præstaret jam, pauperem fuisse, non regem!

[2] O felicem pauperum conditionem, et illorum securam vitam atque beatam, qui panem comedunt cum sudore sui vultus, qui vivunt labore manuum suarum! Nam mihi misero, quid regnum, quid honores, quid obsequia plurimorum contulerunt? . . . . O me miserum et infelicem, qui tam sero fallacem mundum cognosco! qui vitam certe vixissem multo meliorem, si non rex, sed pauper agri cultor fuissam.

[3] Utinam nunquam rex! utinam annos, quos in regno egi exegissem privatus in eremo! Quam nunc securus morerer, quam fidenter ad Dei tribunal pergerem!

your morning offering: My Lord and my God, I am as Thou wishest me to be. I am perfectly satisfied with my poverty. During Thy life on earth, Thy poverty was even greater than mine. I rejoice and thank Thee for having chosen me as Thy companion. Even if Thou refusest me the repose and consolation that Thou generally givest on earth to the poor who are resigned to Thy will, then do, O Lord, as Thou pleasest, for I shall have more than enough in the future reward of Thy heavenly kingdom. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord:

Text.

Et hoc vobis signum: Invenietis Infantem pannis involutum, et positum in præsepio.—Luke ii. 12.

"And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger."

Strange and apparently inconsistent things are announced in to-day's Gospel. The angels proclaim the birth of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. But to whom do they proclaim it? To poor, lowly, and simple shepherds, who were tending their flocks. Where were they to find Him? In a stable. How were they to know Him? He was to be in the form of a little infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. What a wonderful thing, and if I may venture to repeat it, what an inconsistent thing! How do those signs suit Him whose birth is announced? Is He not the King of Heaven and earth? What have the shepherds then to do with Him? Why were not all the princes and monarchs of the world invited to do Him homage on bended knee, as His vassals and servants? Is He not the Almighty God, who is to free the world from the slavery of hell? How is it, then, that He is to be recognised in a garb of such abject poverty? A palace of gold and legions of servants and attendants, although not at all sufficient for His divine Majesty, would still, according to our ideas, be more suitable for Him. Such, my dear brethren, is the judgment of the blind world, and of all the children of the world; but the God of Infinite Wisdom, who became man for love of us, judges quite differently. The proud world esteems and values only what appears great in the eyes of men; the comfort-loving world believes only in wealth and riches, and detests poverty and want above everything. Jesus Christ, our

Saviour, comes into the world to confound its false wisdom, for He chose, from His very birth, the most extreme poverty, the very opposite to what the world loves. Either the world is wrong in its judgment, says St. Bernard, or else Christ has made a mistake; this latter cannot be, and therefore the judgment of the world, which places happiness in riches and earthly goods, is false. Consequently, that which Christ preaches by word and example, must be true: "Blessed are the poor."[1] And this is what I mean to speak of to-day, for the consolation of the poor and needy; and my principal argument will be the fact that Jesus Christ was born poor, lived poor, and died poor for our sakes. I say, therefore, poor Christians, love your God, and be satisfied in your state with His will; if you do so you are better off and happier than the rich ones of this world. Such is the whole subject. You are better off, and happier in this life, than the rich, as I shall show in the first and longest part, etc.—*continues as before.*

[1] Beati pauperes.

ON THE CONTENTMENT OF EACH ONE IN HIS STATE OF LIFE.

SIXTY-FIFTH SERMON.

ON THE DIVINE DECREE, WHICH HAS APPOINTED A STATE AND CONDITION OF LIFE FOR EACH ONE.

Subject.

1st. It is God who, from all eternity, has pre-ordained and appointed for each one the state of life, with all its circumstances, in which he now is. 2d. Therefore, each one must be fully satisfied in and with his state, no matter what it is.—*Preached on the Feast of the Circumcision of our Lord.*

Text.

Quod vocatum est ab Angelo priusquam in utero conciperetur. —Luke ii. 21.

"Which was called by the Angel, before He was conceived in the womb."

Introduction.

So that Christ had His Name before the eight days were accomplished? Certainly, His name was pre-ordained from all eternity by His heavenly Father, who decreed that He should be called Jesus in time. My dear brethren, we have many names in this world; one has the name of being rich, another of being poor; one of being a master, another of being a servant; one of being well, another of being sick; one of being joyful, another of being sad; one of being a religious, another of being a secular; one is a statesman, another a business man, a third a workman. In a word, there are as many different names as there are conditions and states of life in the world. If I could compare them all with each other, and see wherein they differ, I might, accord

ing to the general opinion, put an end to that which most frequently gives rise to complaints and discontent, for there are few who think their name good enough, and who do not strive for a better one; I mean, there are few who are fully satisfied with their state of life, and who do not find something therein to be displeased with and to complain of. And the reason of this is, in most cases, because people will not think nor acknowledge how and from whom they get their name or state of life. To-day the custom is for one to wish the other a happy New Year; I wish, therefore, to each and all of you, from my heart, that in which happiness consists, namely, perfect and constant contentment in your different states of life. And that my wish may not be an empty one and without fruit, I will now, and in another sermon also, show how each one can and must be content with his state, and that I will do by explaining this one truth, that, namely, before the creation of the world, God has so appointed for each one.

Plan of Discourse.

It is God who, from all eternity, has pre-ordained and appointed for each one the state of life, with all its circumstances, in which he now is. Such is the basis of the first part. Therefore, each one must be fully satisfied in and with his state, no matter what it is. The conclusion of the second part.

O, all-wise Creator and Ruler of the world, grant us all, through the intercession of Mary, and the holy angels guardian, the grace to acknowledge and understand the first, so that, as far as the second is concerned, we may be always fully satisfied with Thy most holy will and decree.

The world is governed by the providence of God.

With regard to the first point, that God has pre-ordained for every one the state of life in which he is, with all its circumstances, I do not think it will take long to prove it, for, as I hope, I have not now to deal with atheists and infidels, who, blinded by vice and of darkened understanding, and that they may more freely indulge in sin, maintain that there is no God, and, as some heathen philosophers taught, that the world was made by chance, from a number of atoms. A folly that refutes itself, and that no sound reason could admit for a moment. Or if they believe in God, they say that He reigns in Heaven, and does not concern Himself about the affairs of mortals. Everything that happens is mere chance, depending on the changes of seasons, the run of luck, and the different dispositions and plans

of men. No, I have to do with true Christians, and true Catholic Christians, who believe, with me, in the one eternal, true, living, infallible Word, that has been interpreted by the Catholic Church, and who therefore adore God, who is present everywhere, and who is always working in each and every one of His creatures; that God who, as He created Heaven and earth by one word: "He spoke and they were made,"[1] so also He created the first man and all his posterity; that God who fixed their course for the sun and moon, and gave the stars their place in the firmament; who has placed bounds to the sea that it dare not pass; who has given a certain place, condition, movement, and operation to all inanimate things; who has fixed for rational creatures a certain time in which they should be created or born, in which they are to live and die, certain parents who are to give them birth, certain circumstances in which they must live; who has appointed the understanding they are to have in their soul, the size of their bodies, their outward appearance, strength, health, natural and supernatural gifts, temporal means, and everything else they have or are at every moment, one way to-day, another to-morrow. All these things God has pre-ordained in His all-wise providence from all eternity.

Not even the least thing excepted.

Not even the least thing happens in the world by chance, nor, as we are wont to say, by good or bad luck. Everything, sin alone excepted, happens with the knowledge and by the will and decree of God. Be assured, says St. Augustine, "nothing happens that is not first either commanded or permitted in the invisible court of the Supreme Monarch."[2] When we consider things merely according to the outward senses,—for instance, the change of weather, which is sometimes warm and sometimes cold, or else it is raining, or snowing, or hailing; the flight of the birds, which soar aloft in different directions; the blossoming of trees, plants, and flowers, some of which are white, others yellow, while some are long and others short; when we consider these and countless other things that we see daily, we are like little children, who hear the clock strike the different hours; they hear the noise it makes and think that it comes solely from the hammer which strikes the hours, because they know nothing of the works that are hidden inside the clock and regulate its movements. In the same way, too, we pay no atten-

[1] Ipse dixit et facta sunt.—Ps. xxxii. 9.

[2] Nihil fieri sensibiliter, quod te interiori invisibili aula illius imperatoris aut non jubeatur, aut non permittatur.

tion to the beautiful machinery hidden in the divine nature, which ordains and arranges every visible thing, the smallest as well as the greatest, in number, weight, and measure, as the Prophet says.

This providence extends to the smallest and most contemptible things.

Not a hair falls from your head, says Jesus Christ, without the knowledge and will of your heavenly Father:[1] Not a sparrow flies through the air without the divine decree: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father."[2] One bird builds its nest in a tree, another elsewhere; a leaf is blown by the wind to a certain place, at a certain time; a plant in the garden grows to a certain height; the rain, hail, or snow fall upon me as I am walking the streets; the flies torment, or bite me; one of them happens to get into my hand, and I crush it to death; all these things and every other imaginable event, happen with the knowledge, will, and decree of God: "All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing."[3] God is the only Father of this great household, who arranges, moves, and regulates all that happens in the whole world, at all times. And He takes as great care, and no less trouble with the smallest creature, as with the greatest. The Sacred Scripture says: "He made the little and the great, and He hath equally care of all."[4] He is as much concerned for the poorest and most miserable child that begs its bread from door to door, as for a great king who rules over men. It gives Him no more trouble to move and regulate the immense machinery of the heavens, than to transport a grain of dust from one place to another. Nor is He less careful of an insect, a worm of the earth, as long as He pleases to leave it its natural life, than He is of keeping the whole earth in its proper place. St. Gregory says: "God takes as much care of each thing, as if He had nothing else to look after."[5] Oh, my dear brethren, I must exclaim with St. Augustine, what a wise, powerful and wonderful God we have! "He who created the angels in Heaven, created also the worms of the earth."[6] And I add, He who takes care of the angels, is equally careful of a worm of the earth!

[1] Capillus de capite vestro non peribit.—Luke xxi. 18.

[2] Nonne duo passeres asse veneunt? et unus ex illis non cadet super terram sine Patre vestro.—Matth. x. 29.

[3] Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil.—John i. 3.

[4] Pusillum et magnum ipse fecit, et æqualiter est illi cura de omnibus.—Sap. vi. 8.

[5] Sic intendit Dominus singulis, ac si vacet a cunctis.

[6] Qui fecit in cœlo angelum, fecit in terra vermiculum.

How much more careful of men, who are each allotted a certain state of life.

Now if it is true that God creates, provides for, and preserves even the smallest irrational and lifeless creatures, in certain time, place, and circumstances, how much more is it not true of reasoning beings, for whose sake He has made all other things in Heaven and earth, that they might be the servants of man and help him to attain his last end ; for whose sake the Eternal Son of God came down from His throne, was made man, and gave up His own life-blood, that man, whom He created, might rejoice with Him for all eternity? Such is the teaching of our Lord Himself in the Gospel of St. Matthew ; He tells His disciples to consider the care He takes of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field : "Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns ; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Consider the lilies of the fields, how they grow; they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. Are not you of much more value than they?"[1] I know what conclusion I must draw, O Lord ! If Thou art so careful of the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, Thou wilt also take care of me. If Thou hast from all eternity fixed for each thing its certain time, place, measure, condition, and nature or mode of life, much more hast Thou done so for me and for every human being ! That this is the case, I am assured by St. Paul from the words of our Lord Himself, for that Apostle, writing to the Corinthians, and advising people of all conditions as to their conduct, husbands, wives, widows, unmarried people, and servants, says to them : "I would that all men were even as myself;" but that cannot be ; "every one hath his proper gift from God ; one after this manner, and another after that ; . . . . as the Lord hath distributed to every one, as God hath called every one, so let him walk ;"[2] "let every man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God."[3] Mark, my dear brethren, how the Apostle often repeats the same thing, in order to impress deeply on our minds the great truth, that it is God who appoints for each one his state of life, with all its circumstances : "As the Lord hath distributed to every one."[4]

[1] Respicite volatilia cœli, quoniam non serunt, neque metunt, neque congregant in horrea; et Pater vester cœlestis pascit illa. Considerate lilia agri, quomodo crescunt ; non laborant, neque nent . . . . . Nonne vos magis pluris illis?—Matth. vi. 26, 28, 29.

[2] Volo autem omnes homines esse, sicut meipsum. Unusquisque proprium donum habet ex Deo, alius quidem sic, alius vero sic . . . . . unicuique sicut divisit Dominus; unumquemque sicut vocavit Deus, ita ambulet.—I. Cor. vii. 7, 17.

[3] Unusquisque in quo vocatus est, in hoc permaneat apud Deum.—Ibid. 24.

[4] Unicuique sicut divisit Dominus.

Proved by similes.

Just as he, who has the direction of a theatre, gives to each of the actors his proper part, according to what he knows of each one's skill and cleverness; nor does any one of them receive the same dress, nor have they all to say the same words, or to do the same things; but every one must act as the character assigned to him requires. Or, just as a painter who is about to paint some great historical subject, does not make all the persons whom he represents on the canvas of the same size, position, and stature, for if he did so, his picture would be a mere daub; but he paints some of them full-sized, while he puts others in the background. One sits on a throne, another stands in an humble posture like an attendant, a third is on horseback, a fourth is on foot, a fifth laughs, a sixth weeps, a seventh looks up to Heaven, an eighth folds his hands and looks down on the ground. Each one is portrayed in the attitude that suits the subject of the painting, and the skill of the artist consists in making them all in due proportion, whether they are to be large or small, dark or light, cheerful or sorrowful. In the same way, says St. Paul, the great Artist of the universe has arranged the different creatures on earth with the greatest prudence and wisdom, in placing men in so many different conditions. "Every one hath his proper gift from God, one after this manner, and another after that."[1] That one person should be a strong man, another a weak woman; one a sovereign, another a subject; one a master, another a servant; one of high, another of low descent; one a religious, another in the world, and married to such and such a person; one a soldier, another a merchant; one a tradesman, engaged in a particular business; one rich, another moderately well-off, a third in absolute poverty; one always healthy, another always sickly; one always happy and prosperous, another always in sorrow and distress; one prudent and clever, another simple and stupid; all these and the other different circumstances in which men live, are, as it were, the characters that the Supreme Master of the theatre of this life has distributed to different individuals: "As the Lord hath distributed to every one."[2]

Therefore, every one must be content with his state of life.

From all this the Apostle draws the evident and undeniable conclusion, that every one must be contented and satisfied with the divine decree, in, and according to his state of life. "Let every man wherein he was called, therein abide with God."

[1] Unusquisque proprium donum habet ex Deo, alius quidem sic, alius vero sic.
[2] Unicuique sicut divisit Dominus.

"Wast thou called, being a bond-man? Care not for it;"[1] care for nothing but to act that part well, because God has called you to it. No matter who, what, or where you are, remember that you are as God has decreed and wished you to be. This thought alone should and must suffice to make you satisfied with your state. Such is the conclusion drawn by St. Paul, as we shall see in the

Second Part.

And justly too, if he acts wisely.

As long as I am under the authority of another, who has the right to do as he pleases with me and mine, and from whose authority I cannot escape, even if I wished, prudence requires that at least I should be patient, and allow him to govern me as he likes; for what would be the use of murmuring against him, or trying to resist his authority? I could not change my position for the better, but would rather make it more difficult and more irksome. Is not that so, my dear brethren? But now, suppose I am sure that my master is far wiser and more prudent than I, and that he knows best what is beneficial or injurious to me. If, moreover, I am certain that he is well inclined towards me, and that he will not lay any command on me that is not just, and right, and for my own good; then, not only would I act with great imprudence by complaining of his commands, but the mere thought of what he is should fill me with contentment, joy, and consolation in doing everything he tells me. Is not that true also? Now, as we have seen already, it is God who, from all eternity has pre-ordained and decreed for me the state of life in which I live, with all its circumstances. This state may be pleasing or displeasing to me; it may suit my inclination or not; but have I any reason for being discontented with it? What would be the use of that? Is not God the same unchangeable Lord He always was, with whom to will is the same as to accomplish? As the Prophet David says: "He hath done all things whatsoever He would,"[2] in Heaven and on earth. He still orders everything as He wills in Heaven and on earth; nor is He apt to change His will, or invert His order on my account. If He had no other object in all His decrees, but, "such is my will,"[3] who could say anything against Him?

[1] Servus vocatus es? Non sit tibi curæ.—I. Cor. vii. 21.
[2] Omnia, quæcunque voluit, fecit.—Ps. cxiii. 11.
[3] Sic volo.

Run your head against a stone wall that stands in your way, and see if the wall will give way to you. It is God who has appointed for me my state of life. Must I, then, murmur or complain if that state is a lowly one? He is the Lord who has given me gratuitously, and out of pure generosity, all that I have; He could have given me much less and have placed me in a much lower state. The proverb tells us not to look a gift horse in the mouth. It is God who has given me my state; have I, then, any reason to say to Him: "Why hast thou made me thus?"[1] Is He not the Lord of Infinite Wisdom, who does everything for the weightiest reasons, so that, to His eternal praise, be it said: "He hath done all things well."[2] It is God who has given me my state: can I hope, or wish, or desire to be anything better than I am now, and than God wishes me to be? Should I not rather be greatly pleased and rejoiced with my state? Is He not the Lord, who calls Himself my Father, who assures me that He has written me down in His hands,[3] who is so much concerned for me and my welfare, that He did not spare His only-begotten, eternal Son, but delivered Him up for my sake to a most disgraceful death, and who knows most exactly, and has known from eternity and foreseen what is best for me and my soul? All this is quite enough to convince me that there is in the whole world no better place or state for me, than that in which I now am, according to His most wise and beneficent decrees, and that I ought to allow Him to do with me in future as He pleases.

How foolish to complain. Shown by a simile.

How inconsistent, foolish, and wicked, therefore, are the complaints of those who are not content, either with God, or with themselves, in their state of life? In order to understand this all the more clearly, we shall again have recourse, for a short time, to the similes used before. Suppose, my dear brethren, on the stage of a theatre, one who has to represent a peasant, or a beggar, begins to murmur against the manager, and to say: Why have I been selected for this mean part? See that other actor decked out with crown and sceptre, and clad in purple and gold, while I must put on a ragged coat, and an old battered hat. He is almost always on the stage, and attracts every one's attention, but I am not allowed to appear more than once or twice. Is he any better than I? Have we not made the same studies in the same school? Why can I not, then, represent a king as well as he?

[1] Cur me fecisti sic?—Rom. ix. 20. [2] Omnia bene fecit.—Mark vii. 37.
[3] In manibus me descripsi te.—Isai. xlix. 16.

What would you think of such complaints, my dear brethren? Would they show good sense? If it was a child who made them they might be excusable on account of simplicity or ignorance. What, the manager would say, do you want to upset the whole piece? What have you to complain of? You must act the part that is given to you, and if you do it well, the audience will praise you as much as the others, and more, too, if the others do not perform their parts as they ought. If you are not satisfied, you must leave the stage and not have anything to do with the piece.

Another simile.

We can imagine the same thing with the painting. Suppose that the picture had life, and could speak, and that the figure of a man that is painted in the background very small, with only the head visible, and almost hidden in dark colors, were to get discontented and to quarrel with the other figures of the picture, saying: I have been long enough in that dark corner. Why is that other figure so large? I am made of the same colors. I wish to come forward too, and to show that I am not so small and mean as I have hitherto appeared. You poor fool, the painter would say, what business have you to destroy my work? You must thank my skill and labor for the position you occupy, that is one required by the rules of art. Do not ask me why; but keep quiet in the place in which I have put you; otherwise, I will make short work of you, for I have only to take my brush and destroy you altogether. There would soon be an end to all murmurs and complaints, if every one knew his Master and Creator, and were content with the place and state allotted to him.

Yet most men find fault with their state.

My dear brethren, what I have represented to you by those two similes, really occurs amongst us mortals every day, on the great stage of life, in the great picture of the world. The characters, as I said before, are distributed by God; the figures are placed by Him in the picture, with as many differences and distinctions as there are different states in life. The Lord has done all according to the rules of art: "He hath done all things well."[1] But it is a great mistake of our corrupt nature, that we refuse to acknowledge the act. The majority of us cannot suit ourselves to it. There is hardly one in a hundred who is quite satisfied with his state and with its accidental circumstances. One wants this, another that; one thinks his state too lowly and despicable, another thinks his too poor, a third complains of having too much care and trouble, a fourth of having too much

[1] Omnia bene fecit.

sorrow and suffering. There is no end of murmurs and complaints; nearly every one wishes to be better off than he is. If we only think how it is with most people in the world, we shall find that even they who make profession of serving God, and leading a Christian life, if they meet with any contradiction, or disappointment, find fault at once with their state, as if it were to blame. Would that I had become a priest, says one, who groans under the trouble and care of bringing up little children and providing for them; if I had known what was in store for me, I would not have entered this state! I wish I had remained in the world, thinks the discontented religious, I could have supported myself, and served God as well! Oh, way did God bind me to a drunken, ill-tempered, and good-for-nothing husband? cries a discontented wife. Why am I tied to that useless and wicked woman? thinks an unhappy husband. And both are to blame, for they are always quarrelling with each other. I wish I had never seen that man, that I had never set eyes on that person; such are the complaints of masters against their servants, of servants against their masters, of inferiors against their superiors. Oh, would I were an angel, sighs the pious man, when he is annoyed by temptations. Would I had died in my cradle, thinks another; I would not be in such danger of losing my soul! Would that my parents had allowed me to study, says the tradesman, when he is tired with his work; I could manage the pen much easier than the hammer! He who has little to do complains of his enforced idleness. He who is kept very busy, complains that he can neither eat nor sleep quietly. Those who are small, wish to be great; the young desire to appear older, the old to be younger. We need not speak of the oppressed and sorrowful; their inordinate impatience shows clearly enough that they are not contented with their state. Why has that misfortune happened to me? they ask. Why has God afflicted me by the untimely death of my father, mother, son, daughter, wife? Why am I poor and without bread to eat, while others have more than they want? Why am I weak, ailing, and sickly, while so many wicked people are strong and healthy? Why must I earn my bread in the sweat of my brow, while others can live in idleness? Why am I despised and looked down upon, while others enjoy honor and prosperity? Are we not all made of the same earth and do we not all come from the same father Adam?

No one is satisfied

O God of goodness, what a number of complaints I hear against

with what God does for him.

Thee! I thought that Thy infinite wisdom decreed nothing but what is just, and holy, and good, and right, and in proper order; yet if I am to believe the judgments of men, everything seems to be in confusion and disorder amongst them, and nobody is in his right place. Yes, O Supreme Monarch, Thou hast done all things well in Heaven and on earth, but there is hardly one man whom Thou canst please! Thou hast made the sun, moon, stars, and other heavenly bodies, and placed them in proper order: Thou hast given the winds their velocity, the elements their proper qualities, and none can find fault with what Thou hast done: men alone are not as they ought to be, and if we believe their complaints, Thou hast not dealt with them fairly nor justly. So that Thou, O God of infinite wisdom, who canst not err, nor be deceived in anything, hast made a great mistake in the creation, preservation, government, and direction of man! We must either admit this, my dear brethren, or confess that we are laboring under a grievous mistake, and that we are guilty of the greatest folly and injustice when we murmur or complain. The first cannot be the case, therefore the second must be the undoubted truth.

Great presumption.

Oh, poor mortal, worm of the earth, who are you who dare to contradict the decree of the Almighty? Such is the question that the Lord asked His servant Job: "Wilt thou make void my judgment," and subvert my decrees, "and condemn me, that thou mayest be justified?"[1] Remain in thy appointed place, and complain not of the order I establish, or else I have only to withdraw my hand from thee and thou shalt fall into nothingness. What thou art, where, and how thou art, from whom hast thou all that, if not from Me? If I have given thee less than others, I have not done thee wrong thereby, because I am not bound to give thee anything. If I deprive thee of father, mother, children, friends, and relatives by death; if I take away thy money and property, by losses and misfortune; thy health and strength, by sickness; thy comfort and joy, by sorrows and trials, I take from thee nothing that belongs to thee, nothing but what was mine already. "Friend, I do thee no wrong. Take what is thine, and go thy way."[2] Take what I wish to give thee, and go and use it according to my will. Is it not enough for thee that I have created thee to my own image, that thou mayest

[1] Numquid irritum facies judicium meum, et condemnabis me, ut tu justificeris?—Job xl. 3.

[2] Amice, non facio tibi injuriam. Tolle quod tuum est, et vade.—Matth. xx. 13, 14.

be happy with Me for all eternity, and that I may give myself to thee forever, while I have left so many millions of men, whom I might have created, in their original nothingness? If thou dost not look upon this as a benefit, I have at least done thee no wrong, and therefore thou hast no cause for complaint.

Conclusion and resignation to the will of God.

Therefore, oh, man, remain as you are, and be satisfied with what the Lord has given you. "If you are enough for God," says St. Cyprian, "let God be enough for you."[1] So it is, O great God, my sovereign Ruler! I must say with the Prophet Job: "What can I answer, who have spoken inconsiderately,"[2] and complained hitherto without cause? "I will lay my hand upon my mouth,"[3] and keep silence; I will be contented with Thee, and with myself in all humility. And meanwhile, I return Thee heartfelt thanks, O eternal God, for having created and preserved me as I am, for having given me this time, place, state, employment, and other circumstances in which to live. I desire to be nothing less, nor greater, nor better, than what I now am, according to Thy will. Thou knowest why Thou wishest me to be so and not otherwise; it is not for me to inquire the cause thereof. My duty is to receive, like a poor mendicant, the alms Thou givest me, be they great or small, for I know that, as Thy Prophet says: "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right."[4] Dost Thou wish me to live henceforward in a different way? Then I am in Thy hands; do with me as Thou wilt; Thou wilt find me as Thou wishest me to be. Amidst all the accidents, sorrows, and troubles of life, I shall keep my mind at rest, and console myself with the thought that Thou, O God of Infinite Wisdom, hast so decreed for me. Even if I did not know that it is for my greater good, I am at least certain that it is in accordance with Thy will, and that it cannot be better than Thou wishest it to be. It is for Thee, O Lord, to appoint a state of life for me; it is for me to fulfil the duties of that state so as to please Thee. And this I will always try to do, henceforth, with Thy grace, as long as Thou art pleased to leave me on this earth. In all other things, O Lord, "Thy will be done."[5] Let that be our conclusion. Amen.

[1] Sufficis tu Deo, sufficiat tibi Deus.
[2] Quid levitur locutus sum, respondere quid possum?—Job xxxix. 34.
[3] Manum meam ponam super os meum.—Ibid.
[4] Justus es, Dominus, et rectum judicium tuum.—Ps. cxviii. 137.
[5] Fiat voluntas tua.

Another Introduction for the Feast of St. John the Evangelist:

Text.

Sic eum volo manere, donec veniam: quid ad te? tu me sequere.—John xxi. 22.

"So I will have him to remain till I come; what is it to thee? follow thou Me."

When Christ had appointed Peter as Prince of the Apostles, and Head of the whole Church, and had foretold that he would die as a martyr for His Name's sake, Peter was curious to know what would become of John, his fellow-Apostle, what duties he would have to do, and what sort of a death he would die. "Lord," he asked, "and what shall this man do?"[1] Christ, answered: "So I will have him to remain till I come: what is it to thee? follow thou Me."[2] By which words, as St. John Chrysostom, writing on to-day's Gospel, tells us, He meant: Is it not enough for you that I have told you what I wish you to do? "You know your duty, see that you labor to perform it well, and prepare for the combat that is in store for you."[3] "What is it to you if I wish this man to remain here?"[4] "Do you attend to your own duty and fulfill it."[5] St. John Chrysostom continues, "Thus teaching us, that we must not be sad, nor inquire too curiously into the divine decrees, and be content with merely knowing the will of God."[6] Would that all men profited by this lesson, my dear brethren; what a quiet, contented, and happy life they would lead in the world! "And what shall this man do?" Such is the question that most men ask in their different states and conditions of life. Why is one rich, another poor? Why is one a great lord, and another a servant? Why is one in prosperity, another in adversity? Why is one healthy, another sick? They thus disturb themselves, and few of them are so contented with their state, that they do not find much to complain of and murmur at. But, we must say to such people: What is it to you[7] how others are situated? Mind yourself; see that you do your duty properly, and be contented with the state

[1] Domine, hic autem quid?

[2] Sic eum volo manere, donec veniam: quid ad te? tu me sequere.

[3] Opus suscepisti, id considera, perfice, labora et te certaminibus expone.

[4] Quid ad te, si volo eum manere hic?

[5] Tu officium tuum cura et exsequere!

[6] His verbis nos erudiens, neque dolendum, neque curiosius præter divinam voluntatem investigandum.

[7] Quid ad te?

appointed for you. You must not trouble yourselves, because others are in a different position, nor be too curious in seeking the reason of that. This uneasy curiosity comes principally from the fact that men do not think nor acknowledge from whom they have received the state of life and condition in which they are. That every one may henceforth be satisfied, no matter what circumstances he is placed in, I say, as the subject of to-day's sermon: It is good, etc.—*continues as before.*

SIXTY-SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE ALL-WISE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN ARRANGING DIFFERENT STATES OF LIFE.

Subject.

God has arranged different states: 1st, for our greater good in general; 2d, for the greater good of each one in particular. Therefore, each one must be fully satisfied with the divine will in his state.—*Preached on the Feast of the Epiphany of our Lord.*

Text.

Vidimus stellam ejus in oriente, et venimus adorare eum. —Matth. ii. 2.

"We have seen His star in the East and are come to adore Him."

Introduction.

These wise kings were called from the East by a star; the poor and simple shepherds who were in the fields near Bethlehem were called by an angel; the report of all this, without doubt, called many others from Jerusalem and the neighboring places. All these people were brought in different ways and manners to the same place, that they might adore the new-born God and offer Him their homage. The kings, when they had seen the star, and the shepherds, when exhorted by the angel, were ready at once to obey and came to adore Christ. My dear brethren, all of us in this life are called for the same purpose, namely, to serve God here, and to possess Him as our reward hereafter for-

ever. But we are not called in the same way, nor have we to serve Him all in the same state and condition of life. St. Paul says: "Every one hath his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that."[1] It is God who from all eternity has appointed for each one his state of life, with all its circumstances. The arrangement is made in time, not by chance, as people were wont to distribute Epiphany cards to each other on the vigil of this Feast, not blindly, nor by accident, but according to the all-wise determination of divine providence. And for this very reason every one can and must be content with his state of life, and all its circumstances, no matter what it is, and must live in perfect and peaceful resignation to the divine will; as I proved in the last sermon. Now, as there are many who are dissatisfied with their state, they might ask me, why has God made the states and conditions of men so different? Is He not the Father of this great household? Are we not all His children, and alike according to nature? How comes it, then, that we are treated so differently? That one gets more, another less; that one is in a high, another in a lowly position; that one can live in idleness and comfort, while another must live in poverty and hard work; that one is rich, another poor? To answer these complaints, I will now show that all these things are perfectly just, right, and consistent, and for our greater good.

Plan of Discourse.

God has arranged all things for our greater good in general. The first part. For the greater good of each one in particular. The second part. Therefore, each one must be fully satisfied with the divine will in his state. The conclusion.

To this end continue to give us Thy powerful grace, O Lord, through the merits of Mary and our holy angels guardian!

There are many different members in the body.

Amongst other wonderful things that God has created, and in which we can admire and acknowledge the infinite power, wisdom, and skill of the great Artist, is the human body, which is called a microcosm, that is, a little world, on account of the artistic arrangement of its different members, one of which surpasses the other in size, excellence, and strength, and every one of which has its own appointed place and function. The head occupies the principal place, and is the council-chamber in which

[1] Unusquisque proprium donum habet ex Deo; alius quidem sic, alius vero sic.—I. Cor. vii. 7.

the reason weighs everything, and directs the other members. The eyes are placed just below the forehead to see; the ears are on both sides of the head to hear; the arms and hands can be stretched out much farther that they may work, and help the other members; the feet are placed underneath to bear the body from one place to another; the teeth are placed in the mouth to masticate the food; the stomach is placed in the centre of the body to digest the food; the heart is so placed that it can send the blood through all the veins. Each member has its own duty to perform, and differs from all the others in form and appearance. Do you still ask, you who are discontented with your state of life, why does God, who calls Himself the common Father of all, make such distinctions amongst His children in this life, and treat them so differently? If so, I will not answer you, but I will ask you with Theodoret: "Why has not the Supreme Artificer given to all the members of our body the same strength and power?"[1] Why does the eye see, and not the ear? Why does the mouth eat, and not the foot? Why do the hands labor, and not the face? Why is one placed higher than the other? Again, tell me why are not all the members eyes, because God could have made them so by a single act of His will?

That difference necessary to the stature and support of the body.

You need not think long on the matter; the answer is ready. You know that otherwise the body would be deformed and unshapely, because it requires more than eyes to see, for its support. It must hear, feel, smell, taste, walk, stand, and work, nor could it do all these things if it was nothing but an eye. Besides, where would the eye get its strength from, if there was no stomach? how could it go about from one place to another, to see different things, if there were no feet to carry it? etc. In a word, the difference between the members is necessary for the support of the body, that one may be able to help the other, and that all may concur in preserving themselves in their proper position. Without that order, difference, and concurrence, the whole body would be destroyed. Such is the case. Suppose, now, that all the members were independent, and that they began to murmur amongst themselves and to complain of their position and duty. The feet complain of the load they have to carry, and would wish to be higher up and to see like the eyes; the hands grow tired of working and wish to digest like the stomach,

[1] Cur non omnibus corporis nostri membris imam et eamdem vim rerum Opifex indiderit? —Orat. 6. *De Providentia.*

or else refuse to supply it with food. What would become of the body in that case? Try it for a few weeks: let the hands lie idle and give no food to the stomach, and see how it will be with you. Hands, feet, and stomach must die of hunger.

The same difference is necessary in all states of life to support man.

It is just the same with us men in this world, my dear brethren. We constitute a body, as St. Paul says: "We being many, are one body in Christ," who is our Head, "every one members, one of another. Having different gifts according to the grace that is given us."[1] We have received duties to perform that are very different from each other. Why is that? It is necessary, in order to keep the whole moral body in a proper condition. Experience proves that one cannot exist, or can do so only for a very short time, without the help of another of different condition; so miserable is man when he is alone. We live in society, and by society our lives are preserved. Let us consider merely those things, my dear brethren, that we require for our daily support. We must at least have bread to eat; but how are we to get it? The ground has to be tilled, the corn must be sown; there must be some one to do that, and to provide enough for millions of people; they who do it are laborers or agriculturists. Many different implements are necessary to till the land properly, ploughs for instance, and smiths are required to make them. The corn must be ground after being threshed, the meal must be made into dough, and baked in an oven; therefore, there must be millers and bakers. See how many different occupations are necessary to supply us with bread alone! But we must have something to drink, too, and we have either to content ourselves with water, or there must be people to make something else for us, to dig the ground and plant the vineyard. We require clothes, and where are we to get them? It would not do for us to make garments of leaves, like our first parents. We must have wool, that has to be first shorn from the sheep, then cleaned, carded, spun, woven, pressed, cut and shaped to the size of the body. Who will do all that? The head and feet must also be covered; so that hats and stockings and shoes are wanted. Who will provide us with all those things? You see, therefore, that weavers, dyers, hatters, shoemakers, and tailors are required. We must have houses to live in, to protect us from the rain and snow and cold air; different articles of food must be brought from one country to another, because everything cannot grow

[1] Multi unum corpus sumus in Christo, singuli autem alter alterius membra. Habentes donationes secundum gratiam, quæ data est nobis, differentes.—Rom. xii. 5–6.

in the one place: therefore, there must be builders, sailors, and drivers. Arms, offensive and defensive, are necessary to keep off the attacks of enemies; the liberal arts and sciences must be taught and learned, that the country may be governed properly: and the same may be said of countless other usages, occupations, and employments that require people of different trades and arts, without which human society could not exist.

The desire for equality is foolish and purposeless.

Where are you now, you uneasy people, who are dissatisfied with your lot in life? Let us again hear your complaints and murmurs, your wishes and desires. Oh, what a difference there is between people in this world! Why must I work hard for my daily bread, while others have only to sit down and it is brought to them? Why am I so poor that I must beg for food? Could not God give me money and property, as He has given to others? Why am I a servant, while others are masters and mistresses? Why I am always in trouble, while others have nothing to annoy them? Would that I had never entered on this state! Would that I had never known the person who now torments me so! If I had only become a priest! If I had only remained in the world! I wish I was this! I wish I was that! etc. All very well; but what does it all mean? Do you wish that all men should be equal? That one should be as rich, as honored, as clever, as learned as another; that one should have as many comforts as another; in a word, that there should be perfect equality of states and conditions of life? But, O God of goodness, if Thou wert to grant that wish, and to place every one in the condition in which he desires to be, would people be satisfied then? I do not think so; for their imaginations would then suggest something else to be desired. We have a very inconstant and changeable will; what we like to-day, we detest to-morrow; at eleven o'clock we long for something that we cannot bear the sight of at twelve. So that if Thou, O Lord, wert pleased to allow each one to have what he desires, Thou shouldst change and invert, every hour in the day, the present order of things.

For thus every one would be badly off, and the world could not subsist.

Still, suppose, my dear brethren, that God were to arrange matters according to the wish and desire of each individual; suppose that we are all equal, as we wish to be; what is the consequence? Mercy on us, what a state of things there would be then! How many years, nay, how many months or weeks do you think the world could last under such circumstances? Who would till the ground, or reap the corn? Who would thresh,

and bake bread? Who would cut wood and stone to build houses? Who would make hats, shoes, stockings, and clothes? Who would be a servant? But, you think, I would be rich enough, I could have everything for money, and might employ people to do all that for me. What people? Other people, you say, who wish to earn money. But they are as well off as you, and no doubt they will study their own comfort too. Do you think that if I am not in want of you, I am likely to attend on you, or to work for you? If I am as great and as rich as you, what do I care for your money? And again, if you expect others to work for you while you remain idle, what becomes of the equality you are so anxious for? See what confusion you would cause if you had your way. Every one would know all the trades and professions, and every one would be master, and have to wait on himself; every one would be a ruler, and at the same time a baker, a mason, a shoemaker, and a tailor. In a word, every one would be wretched with that imaginary happiness, and the world would soon go to ruin.

We must therefore admire and praise the wise arrangements of providence.

Acknowledge, therefore, that such a wish would be wrong and foolish, and that it would be of no service to the welfare and preservation of the human race, while the manifold differences and distinctions that exist amongst men are absolutely necessary. Learn from this to admire the wisdom and foresight of our heavenly Father, who bestows His gifts in unequal measure, but so that all are benefited by them. To one He has given much, to another little, and to a third hardly anything;[1] so that one being subordinate to another, they may be mutually dependent on and helpful to one another. When the organ builder wishes to make an organ, does he make all the pipes of the same size? By no means, for that would spoil the work completely. No; some of the pipes must be very large, others medium-sized, and others again very small, according to the order in which they are placed. The large pipes require a lot of wind, and give forth a loud, coarse note, the medium-sized require less wind, and make less noise, while the smallest require hardly any wind and give forth a clear, fine note. What is the reason of that? That musical harmony may come from the blending of different notes; the loud notes support the fine ones, and are helped by them in turn, so that the ear is delighted by their combination. If there was no such difference of note, the organ would give forth only

[1] Unusquisque proprium donum habet ex Deo: alius quidem sic, alius vero sic.—I. Cor. vii. 7.

a monotonous and annoying shriek. In the same way, we must imagine that the whole world is an organ that is furnished with many pipes of different sizes, by its great Builder. The rich are, so to say, the large pipes, that being filled with wind, give forth a great volume of sound; the poor are the smallest pipes, that receive little; but both are necessary to produce harmony. St. Augustine says: "The rich and the poor are two different kinds of men, who cannot do without each other."[1] If there were no rich people, the poor could not live. If there were no poor, the rich would have no one to work for them. The servant depends on his master for his support; the master depends on his servant for the work he expects him to do. And there is no one, no matter how poor and lowly he may be, who cannot sometimes be of assistance and help even to the greatest lord of the land. We learn that from the fable of the mouse and the lion. The mouse had received a kindness from the lion, and out of gratitude promised to help him on the first opportunity. The haughty lion laughed at the idea of a little mouse ever being able to help him. But not long after he was caught in the hunters' toils; he foamed with rage and threw himself from side to side in his efforts to get free, but the more he tried, the tighter became the ropes that bound him, so that believing himself on the point of being made prisoner, he commenced to howl and lament bitterly. The mouse hearing the noise, ran up, and seeing what the matter was, commenced gnawing at the ropes until they were all loosed. The lion was thus set at liberty, and he doubted no longer that a poor little animal could render him a great service. This fable shows that even the lowest, poorest, and most despicable of men can be sometimes useful and even necessary to the service and support of the richest and greatest, and therefore should not be despised. "The rich and the poor are two different kinds of men, who cannot do without each other." It is true, then, O Supreme Lord, that Thou arrangest everything for the general good of all men; true what the Prophet says of Thee: "Thou hast made all things in wisdom."[2] It is for us to be satisfied with the state in which Thou hast placed us, to do our duty to Thy honor and glory, to fulfil Thy holy will, and to be always pleased and contented with Thy all-wise decrees.

Yes, some will think, it is easy for you to talk; I know that

And each one in par-

[1] Dives et pauper duo sunt sibi necessaria.
[2] Omnia in sapientia fecisti.—Ps. ciii. 24.

ticular must be content with his state.

there is a necessity for having different stations in life, but why is mine such a lowly one? Why am I so unfortunate as to be obliged to live in poverty, hard work, and trouble of all kinds, although we are all alike as far as our nature is concerned? How could it injure the general welfare if I were in a better and more comfortable position, and if I, who to-day am so poor, were to become rich to-morrow; if I, who now have so much labor, care, and anxiety, were enabled to live henceforth in peace and quiet? Now, you make out a very good case indeed; but you think only of yourself in the matter; how would it be if every one were like you in that respect? It would be the case of equality over again, for you have no more right to those things than others, nor can you bribe the Almighty God to pay more attention to your fancied claims, than to those of others. Be careful, then, that while you wish to be better off than others, you may not become the most miserable of all; and while you have to remain in your poor and lowly condition, since God will not change, on your account, the order He has established, you do not make that condition far worse by your impatience and discontent. You are in a lowly condition, because God has decreed so for you, and not for others. But why for you? That is a question you must ask God Himself, if you dare do so. I admit that others are better off than you; one is rich, another is a great man; and they have as little claim as you to a better position, on account of their merit before God; but as the matter stands, it is in accordance with the divine will; the will and decree of God are the sufficient reason for it. Let others be as God wills, and do you also be the same; be satisfied with what He has appointed for you, and serve Him according to your condition. I repeat with the Apostle: "As God hath called every one, so let him walk,"[1] so let him eat and live, so let him be and remain. But, that I may give you a more consoling answer to your question: Why has God placed you in that state, and given you, as you think, such an unhappy lot in life, I tell you that that very state, no matter what it is, has been given you by God for your own greater good, and the same is true of every one; so that all should rejoice and be comforted in their state. That is what I shall prove in the

[1] Unumquemque sicut vocavit Deus, ita ambulet.—I. Cor. vii. 17.

Second Part.

Here I must remind you, my dear brethren, of a most important truth that I have treated of at length elsewhere, namely, that according to the unanimous teaching of the holy Fathers, our eternal salvation or our eternal ruin depends, as a general rule, on a certain state of life and on certain circumstances of it; so that he who will save his soul in one state, would lose it in another. That is the first point. Besides, it is certain that God does not wish all men to serve Him in the same manner. Our great King wishes to have different kinds of servants and ministers in His court, just as is the case with earthly kings and princes, who are only poor beggars when compared to the Almighty God. He requires one kind of service from religious, who, like privy-councillors, always stand at His side on the altar and in choir engaged in constant prayer and meditation: another from parochial clergy, whom He sends out as warriors and soldiers to snatch souls from the grasp of the evil one, or to keep them in His service; another from temporal masters and superiors, who, like chancellors and judges, must examine everything and govern His people; another from married people, who have to look after their families and to bring up their children to serve Him; another from the unmarried, the sick, the rich, the poor. Therefore, it is certain that God does not lead all men to Heaven in the one way, but in as many different ways as there are different states, obligations, and duties; so that He wishes one to save his soul in one way, and another in a different way. And we must be very careful to remember that our salvation does not depend on the holiness and excellence of a state, nor on the occupations of a state in themselves, but on the conformity of the state and its occupations with the will and decree of God, who has appointed it for us from all eternity by His all-wise providence.

God does not wish each one to serve Him in any state of life.

Further, it is infallibly certain that God, from whom the future is not hidden, foresees and knows from eternity what will happen to each one who is placed in a certain time and state and in circumstances that are almost infinite in variety, and also how each one will act in those circumstances. "Lord, Thou hast proved me and known me," says the Prophet David. "Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off, and Thou hast foreseen all my ways."[1] Yes, O Lord, I and every one must confess

God has also foreseen what state is best for the salvation of each one, and with the best will on His part to save the souls of all.

[1] Domine, probasti me, et cognovisti me. Intellexisti cogitationes meas de longe, et omnes vias meas prævidisti.—Ps. cxxxviii. 1, 3, 4.

that Thou hast seen what I would do if I were a ruler, a laborer, a rich man, a poor beggar, a merchant or tradesman, a layman, or an ecclesiastic ; Thou hast foreseen what I would do if I were unmarried in the world, or if I had embraced the married state : Thou hast known what would be the consequence if Thou hadst given me a good or a weak understanding : "Thou hast foreseen all the ways" [1] by which Thou couldst have led me. And so, too, hast Thou seen, among all the different states of life with their circumstances, that in which I would save my soul, or lose it, and the circumstances in which I might most conveniently serve Thee, so as to gain Heaven in the way and manner which Thou hast ordained for me in Thy inscrutable designs ! What have I to think and say of all this, oh, my God ? Nothing but what Thy Prophet has said : "There is no speech in my tongue. Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me." [2] I am amazed at Thy infinite wisdom ! Finally, there is no doubt that God, who takes care of the sparrows of the air and of the smallest worm of the earth, takes care also of my eternal salvation ; for, as St. Paul says, His wish and desire is my sanctification ; [3] He wishes that all men, for whom He has shed His Blood, should save their souls. Nor can it be doubted, I repeat, that by His decree, He has placed me in that state, in those circumstances, in which I can best and easiest serve Him according to His intention, and thus work out my salvation and gain eternal happiness, if I only really wish it.

Hence no state is better or more useful for me, than that in which I am by divine decree.

I am then forced to conclude, when I consider all this, that no state, no circumstances in the world could be better for me, than that in which I now am by divine decree. For, what better thing could I desire, than to be in that place, in that way, in which I can best serve God as He wishes me to serve Him, and work out my salvation with the greatest facility, since it is the state that He has selected as the means of leading me to eternal happiness? What better would I be if I had the most holy or most excellent state, if I were not in it according to the will of God? Of what use would the whole world be to me, with all its riches, honors, and pleasures, if I do not go to Heaven ? Therefore, I must live contentedly and peacefully in the state appointed for me by God, and, no matter what it is, I must thank Him for having placed me therein. For otherwise, I, a poor mortal,

[1] Omnes vias prævidisti.
[2] Non est sermo in lingua mea. Mirabilis facta est scientia tua ex me.—Ps. cxxxviii. 4, 6.
[3] Hæc est enim voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra.—I. Thess. iv. 3.

must understand better than the Almighty what is most useful for myself; or else I am blind in what concerns my soul; or I doubt divine providence, as if it did not concern itself about my eternal welfare. Any of these thoughts would be blasphemous in the highest degree.

How foolishly many complain of their state, even under the appearance of piety.

Learn from this, my dear brethren, how wrongly we act, when we complain of our state, and how foolish they are, who, wishing to lead good and Christian lives, disturb and disquiet themselves on account of their piety and their wish to do good and save their souls. If I were rich, says the poor man, I could do more good, go more regularly to Church, and practise the works of Christian charity and mercy better; as it is, I must remain at home and work for my living. How much better I would be with such a mistress, says a discontented maid-servant; she would give me time to say my prayers and to practise devotion; now I can hardly go to Church, except on Sundays, or early in the morning on week-days, to hear Mass; I will be lost altogether! Ah, unfortunate people that we are! says the married woman, when she now and then visits a convent, or sees some one who can spend her time quietly praying at home,—the whole day I am busied with my children and with a thousand household cares; I wish I had become a nun, or had remained unmarried; then I could attend to my soul better, serve God with more zeal, and be more sure of going to Heaven. I have not time now, my dear brethren, to consider such nonsensical complaints more in detail; I shall do so on a future occasion. Now I shall merely content myself with saying, by way of conclusion: Do what God requires of you in the state in which He has placed you, as well as you can, with a good and supernatural intention for His sake, and be content in that state, and while performing its duties, with God and with yourself. Then you will be truly pious, you will serve God as He wishes you to serve Him, and you will work out your salvation according to your state, so that you will be on the right road to Heaven. "As God hath called every one, so let him walk."[1]

Resignation to the will of God for all in general.

Yes, O Supreme Ruler, so shall it be, and so shall it remain, as Thou hast ordained. Thou hast done everything well, and for our greater good. I am satisfied with what Thou hast given me, nor do I wish for anything but what seems good to Thee. If I have received anything better than others, Thou alone art the Giver, and to Thee my fervent thanks are due. If I have

[1] Unumquemque sicut vocavit Deus, ita ambulet.

received less, I still have as much as Thou wishest me to have, and honor and praise are due to Thee for what I have not, as well as for what I have. Meanwhile, I will try to be more zealous in offering Thee the service that is due from my state of life. Thou hast called me to the religious state; I am content therewith, and thank Thee, O God, for the great grace; I will try, with Thy help, to fulfil the duties and obligations of that state. Thou hast commanded me to preach Thy word to others and to instruct them in good; grant that I may say to Thy people what will be for Thy greater glory and the good of their souls. Thou hast given me the great honor of consecrating and partaking of Thy Sacred Body and Blood daily at the altar; ah, grant that I may do so with a clean heart, with chaste eyes and hands, and with the reverence, humility, and devotion befitting so great a mystery. I will always strive to prepare myself for it as well as I can, because that is pleasing to Thee, oh, my God. If Thou hadst wished otherwise, if Thou hadst decreed that I should serve Thee in another state of life, I would have readily submitted to Thee; for I can do nothing more acceptable to Thee, than to do what Thou wilt and what my duty requires. Thou art my God, and I am Thy servant: my life and state are in Thy hands. Such, my dear brethren, should certainly be my sentiments.

For the clergy and laity.

And you, reverend members of the clergy, should unite with me in this conclusion. God has placed you in a holy state; He has appointed for you a holy place and a holy office, in which you share in the inheritance of Jesus Christ; do what you can, therefore, to lead holy lives, and be satisfied, as long as you live, with the divine will. And you, too, laymen whom God has placed in a higher position than others, should unite with me in this conclusion, according to your different states and occupations. There are many who are poorer and less thought of by the world than you; many who must wait upon and serve you; many who are in need of your patronage, help, or advice; many whose happiness, honor, and prosperity, nay, whose very lives often depend on you. Remember that it is God who has placed you in your exalted position, and in His eyes you are no more than others, even the poorest and most despicable, while compared to Him you are less than nothing, and all your present and future happiness, honor, prosperity, condition, occupation, life, time, and eternity, depend on His will and pleasure. Remember that you will one day have to take the lowest places, if you do not direct your lives and actions now according to the divine

law. Keep God always before your minds in everything you do; and if you have an easier life than many others, thank God humbly, not so much on that account, as because the divine will and decree are fulfilled in you. But when you find out that you have also your troubles and difficulties, for there are many who grudge you the happiness they imagine you enjoy, many whose false tongues find fault with your actions, many who will try to supplant you by underhand means,—when you find these and similar trials coming upon you in addition to the ordinary cares that often keep you employed till late at night, remember then that God has so decreed it. Do your duty punctually, and be satisfied in the Lord.

For married people.

Unite with me, also, you married people! The chief duty imposed upon you by your state of life is to bring up your children in a Christian manner, and I have often told you how you are to fulfil it. Ah, parents, you must be most exact in this duty; a great deal depends upon it, namely, Heaven or hell for yourselves and your children for all eternity. Along with this duty, you have many annoyances to contend with every day: some have naughty, obstinate, and disobedient children; others have sickly, delicate, or stupid children; some have too few, others too many children; some, who are all right in this respect, have much to endure from undutiful and obstinate servants; others, who live in constant love and harmony, are in continual fear and anxiety at the least sign of illness, that they are about to be separated by death; others live in strife and dissension; the husband curses the wife, the wife, the husband; oh, what a state of trouble! Others are in great want, and must work hard for their daily bread. Ah, do not complain, no matter what you may suffer! Think to yourselves: God has so willed it for me, with the exception of the cursing and swearing; that and no other is the way in which, if I am patient, I shall save my soul; and therefore, be satisfied in the Lord, all of you.

For the unmarried.

Such should be your conclusion, too, unmarried men and women. But how? Do I mean that you should be content with the state in which you now are, although many of you, no doubt, intend to change it? Certainly many of you are not yet in your definite state of life, and it is not in my power, nor do I wish to interfere with your freedom in selecting a state. Some of you would willingly embrace a state from which you have been hitherto kept away by all kinds of obstacles, even by the opposition of your parents. But remember that it is God who has

placed those obstacles in your way, pray to Him daily for help and advice; resign yourselves fully to His holy will, and be ready to enter on the state to which He will call you, for He knows best what is most suited to secure your salvation. Meanwhile, live in the unmarried state as is becoming before God, that is, in humility, modesty, chastity, careful to avoid the occasions of sin, and be satisfied in the Lord.

For widows. Such should be your conclusion also, widows! Your state has been changed, to the joy of some and the sorrow of others of you: but remember that it is the great God who has effected the change. Follow the advice of the holy Apostle St. Paul: "A woman is bound by the law, as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband die, she is at liberty; let her marry to whom she will; only in the Lord. But more blessed shall she be, if she so remain, according to my counsel."[1] Whatever you do, serve God according to your state, and be content in the Lord.

For servants. Such, too, should be your conclusion, servants. Hear and follow the advice of the same Apostle: "Wast thou called, being a bondman? care not for it,"[2] nor be sorry because you must serve others, for God so wills it. If you appear little in the eyes of the world, you are not so before God, but are often greater and better than kings and rulers: "For he that is called in the Lord, being a bondman, is the freedman of the Lord."[3] Do your duty well and faithfully, and be content in the Lord.

For the oppressed. Such, too, should be your conclusion, you who are in trouble and sorrow. Imagine that you are figures in a picture, or actors in a theatre, who must always weep and sigh, and comfort yourselves with the thought that it is the most wise, just, and loving God who has placed you in that position, that you may rejoice all the more for eternity. Repeat frequently, therefore, when you say the Our Father, although with tears in your eyes, yet with resigned hearts: O Lord, "Thy will be done."[4] I will treat of this more in detail hereafter.

For sinners. Such, too, should be your resolution, oh, sinners! But what am I saying? No, you must not and cannot be content with your state. I recall my words; you must always murmur and be dissatisfied with it, but you must murmur against yourselves, not

[1] Mulier alligata est legi, quanto tempore vir ejus vivit; quodsi dormierit vir ejus liberata est; cui vult nubat, tantum in Domino. Beatior autem erit, si sic permanserit secundum meum consilium.—I. Cor. vii. 39.

[2] Servus vocatus es? non sit tibi curæ.—Ibid. 21.

[3] Qui enim in Domino vocatus est servus, libertus est Domini.—Ibid. 22.

[4] Fiat voluntas tua.—Matth. vi. 10.

against God; for the unhappy state of sin is the only one in which God does not wish you to be. Your own perverse will has brought you to that state; be quick, therefore, and free yourselves from it by sorrow and true repentance, and regain the state of grace. I need say no more now; you have heard enough already, and, as I hope, you are earnestly resolved to amend. Keep your resolution, and you, too, may live in peace.

Conclusion.

Oh, my dear brethren, if you all were to live thus content with your position, according to the will of God, what an agreeable Paradise this earth would soon become! What happy and fortunate times the years would bring about with them! And again I wish you that happiness with all my heart. Serve God as He wishes you to do in your different states; I repeat, in the beautiful words of St. Cyprian: "You are enough for God, let God be enough for you."[1] If God is satisfied with your person, your state, and your occupation, do you also be satisfied with His decree. If a man lives as God wishes him to live, and has God as his Friend, what more does he want?[2] He certainly should have enough. I conclude with the words of St. Paul: "And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,"[3] until we are called away from the state in which God has now placed us, to meet together in that happy state, in which there will be eternal peace, contentment, and joy. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany:

Text.

Eructabo abscondita a constitutione mundi.—Matth. xiii. 35.
"I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world."

There are many great and hidden mysteries, which we in vain try to unravel with our weak intellects, and which we should never know anything about, unless the Lord Himself declared them to us. Nor do I speak now, my dear brethren, of divine mysteries, such as the Trinity of different Persons in the one divine nature, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the real presence of Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine; in these and similar great truths we must humbly submit our understanding

[1] Sufficis tu Deo, sufficiat tibi Deus.

[2] Homo cujus Deus est, quid amplius quærit?

[3] Et pax Dei, quæ exsuperat omnem sensum, custodiat corda vestra, et intelligentias vestras in Christo Jesu.—Philipp. iv. 7.

to the service of faith, and say: I do not understand it, but I believe it firmly as the infallible truth, revealed by an all-wise, truthful, and infallible God; I shall understand it one day, when I shall have the happiness of entering Heaven, where God will show to His elect mysteries that were hidden from the foundation of the world. Amongst the natural events that daily come before us, there is one that puzzles most men, as if it were an incomprehensible mystery; nay, sometimes it makes them murmur and complain; and that is, the difference that God has made in states and conditions of life, amongst us men, as I have explained already. Why should that be? they say; is not God the common Father, etc., as before. To answer these complaints, I will now explain, in a simple and easy manner, this apparently incomprehensible mystery, and will show that it is right, just, consistent, and for our greater good,—*continues as before.*

SIXTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

ON THE CONTENTMENT OF EACH ONE IN HIS STATE OF LIFE, AS FAR AS THE SERVICE OF GOD IS CONCERNED.

Subject.

1st. No one could serve God better in any other state, than he can in that which God has appointed for him. 2d. In another state he would not serve God at all.—*Preached on the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

Text.

Postquam impleti sunt dies purgationis ejus secundum legem Moysi, tulerunt illum in Jerusalem.—Luke ii. 22.

"And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem."

The Blessed Virgin Mary offered two sacrifices to-day in the temple of Jerusalem; as a Mother, she offered her Son to His Eternal Father, and as a Virgin, she sanctified her virginity in the judgment of the world: and both these sacrifices were very difficult ones. She could offer nothing to Heaven that was

greater and more excellent than her divine Son, and humanly speaking, she could offer nothing she loved more to preserve before the world than her virginity; for as the holy Fathers teach, she would have preferred not to be the Mother of God, if she could not have kept her virginal purity. Yet, in obedience to the law of Moses, she had to appear as an ordinary woman, who was in need of purification. But, oh, Immaculate Virgin, thou didst not stand in need of that ceremony! Let them observe it who were subject to the law; it was not made for thee! Certainly, it seems as if the Holy Virgin answered, it is for me, because such is the will of God. My Son has subjected Himself, like a sinner, to the law of circumcision, and I will submit to the law of purification; such is the will of God, and that is enough for me Ah, Mary, obtain from thy Son for me, through the hands of thy angels, the grace that I may to-day impress deeply on my own heart and on the hearts of all present, those few words: Such is the will of God. Then there will be an end to so many fruitless sighs and complaints, for there are only a few who are content in their state of life, while the greater number are always wishing to be better off than they are; and the error of those people comes from the fact that they do not think nor acknowledge that it is the will of God for us to be as we are. My dear brethren, I have already shown that each one can and must be contented and satisfied with his state of life, no matter what it is, because the God of infinite wisdom and goodness has appointed it for him. There are still two other complaints to be examined, one of which is founded on fancied piety; for there are many who say that they cannot serve God as they wish in their state of life, and therefore they are always longing for another state in which they can pay more attention to their salvation. This I will now refute, relying principally on the argument, "Such is the will of God," and I say —

Plan of Discourse.

You would not serve God better, if you were in another state of life, than you now can in that which He has appointed for you. The first part. You would not serve God at all if you were in another state, which He has not appointed for you. The second part. Therefore, if you wish to serve God, perform well the duty required by your state, and be satisfied with the divine decree. The conclusion.

Short repetition of the preceding sermons.

I must here briefly remind you of what I have said in the two last sermons on this subject, for the whole matter rests on that, and if it is properly understood and deeply impressed on the mind, it is sufficient to make any sensible man, no matter who he is, powerful and contented. In the first place, God does not wish from one what He requires from another, nor does He wish all to serve Him in the same way. He is a great king, who desires to have many servants and ministers in different capacities in His court. Hence, every one cannot have the same state, occupation, and mode of life, nor can one perform even as many works of piety and devotion as another, but each one must attend to the divine service as well as he can, in the state of life assigned to him. Secondly, the great difference we see amongst men, one being poor, another rich, one being of high, another of lowly birth, one having an easy, another a hard life, is necessary for the general good, and for the preservation of the world, which could not long subsist if we were all equal. Thirdly, as it is God who rules everything in the world by His providence, and, with the sole exception of sin, does not allow the least thing to happen without His will and decree, so also it is He who makes that difference between men, distributes His gifts according to His own pleasure, and appoints for each one the state of life in which he now is and will be in future. From this it follows that the distribution of states of life is just and reasonable, because the God of infinite wisdom, justice, and holiness cannot fail nor err in His decrees, and therefore no one has a right to make the least complaint of his state or circumstances, no matter what they are. Fourthly, God has appointed the states and circumstances of life for the greater good of each individual, and because He has foreseen that such a state or such circumstances would best enable each one to gain Heaven in the way in which divine providence has resolved to lead him thither. Hence, each one must be not only satisfied with his state of life, but must also rejoice and thank God for having appointed that state for him with all its circumstances, nor has he anything to dread or to guard against but the unhappy state of sin.

Hence appears the folly of those who wish to be in some other state.

Keeping these points well before our minds, we shall now proceed to examine the ordinary complaints, wishes, and desires of many men, who lead discontented and unhappy lives, and who blame the Almighty God, because, as they imagine, they cannot serve Him properly in their present state. We shall see whether they have real cause for complaint, or not. If I were not so poor,

they say, if I were a little better off, so that I need not work so hard the whole day! If I were not so delicate and sickly, so that I must spend the most of my time in the house, or in bed! I wish I had become a priest, or at all events that I could live alone, and avoid all those domestic cares that sometimes almost drive me frantic! If I were not troubled with so many children; if I had not that husband, that wife, who is the cause of all my trouble, discontent, and impatience, and who will drive me mad in the end! If I had another master or mistress, who would give me more free time, or if I could only manage to live without having to attend to others! And many more complaints of the same kind, my dear brethren, that you can easily imagine for yourselves, for you know best what you have often desired and longed for. But now I ask all those people: If you were what and where you wish to be, what then? Oh, then I could serve God better; I could do more good, spend more time in prayer, go to Church oftener, be more generous in the practice of Christian charity and mercy, and attend principally to the business of my soul; whereas now, in my present state, occupation, or business, and with all the cares and anxieties that oppress me, I have hardly time for a serious thought once or twice in the day. Yes, so you think, at all events!

For they do not know whether, or how they could serve God in another state.

But now, with regard to the first point; tell me, how do you know that you would serve God as He wishes you to serve Him, if you were in the state you long for? His providence has placed you in your present state, in the midst of your present cares and anxieties, and not in another state in which you imagine you would be better off. It is not enough to do a good and holy work; the first question is whether God wishes that work to be done at that time and in that way, by that particular person. But I will speak of that in the second part. Suppose, even, that every good work, in every state, performed by any one, were pleasing to God, provided it is done with the proper intention for His sake, how do you know that if you were in the state you long for, you would perform those works of devotion, serve God better, do more good, or attend more to your soul, as you imagine? Have you penetrated the secrets of the divine council-chamber, and there discovered that wonderful knowledge by which God foresees from eternity what can happen to each individual under any possible circumstances, and by which He decrees what is to be done or omitted at certain times? Certainly, neither your knowledge nor mine can reach so far. You know

the state you are in now, and how things go with you from day to day, but you cannot say for certain how it will be with you to-morrow in that state, even for a single hour. You sigh now, later on perhaps you will laugh; now you are full of consolation, bye-and-bye you will lose all courage; to-day you are very devout, to-morrow you will be quite cold in the service of God; to-day you would rather die a thousand times than offend God by a mortal sin, to-morrow you may forget all about it for the sake of some small profit, or on account of an unchaste look or desire, or the love of a creature, and you may give up God, your soul, and Heaven, consent to sin, and sell yourself to the devil. So changeable are we poor mortals in our resolutions! What we eagerly desire one hour, we reject with loathing the next. And how can you say with certainty that you would live well in a state of which you have had as yet no experience? How can you know the difficulties that would await you, the desires and inclinations that would arise in your mind, the temptations with which the devil, the treacherous world, and your own rebellious flesh would attack you? You would in all probability be more dissatisfied and more troubled than you now are in your present state. How, then, can you say that if you were in other circumstances, as you fondly imagine, you could do more good, serve God better, attend more to your soul, and be more certain of Heaven?

We are blind even in things that we daily experience.

With reason the Wise Man says: "The thoughts of mortal men are fearful, and our counsels uncertain."[1] Why are they fearful? Because we are blind as to the future, and know nothing of it. We are like a little child who is left in the dark in a strange room, and is frightened at everything, because he knows not where he is, nor where he is going. If he could come across a chair, the best thing for him to do would be to sit down on it, and keep quiet till a light is brought, or the day breaks. We are blind, my dear brethren, and wander about in the dark whenever we direct our thoughts to the future. We are not able to understand clearly even what is present, much less to know what we would do if we were situated differently. Therefore, if we are wise, we shall dread taking a step in the dark, and longing for another state or condition. The best thing we can do is to sit down quietly on the chair that is already placed for us; that is to say, to content ourselves with the state which God, the Ruler of the world, has allotted us, and to try to serve Him and save

[1] Cogitationes mortalium timidæ et incertæ providentiæ nostræ.—Sap. ix. 14.

our souls therein, as well as we can. I do not think that we should work miracles if we were in any other state.

God gives graces of state to each one, without which no one can serve Him properly.

Again, do you imagine you could serve God better, if you were differently situated? How could you do that? Is it not by the grace and help of God? For, certainly you will not think you can do more than the great Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul, who had to say of himself: "Not I, but the grace of God with me."[1] I do a great deal of good in converting heathens, in procuring the glory of God, in watching[2] and prayer, in suffering hunger and thirst, heat and cold, dangers by land and water, persecutions and trials by day and night, for the name of Jesus Christ; yet, "not I, but the grace of God with me." It is, in fact, an article of faith that no one can perform a single supernatural work, meritorious of Heaven, without the preventing and co-operating grace of God. Now God bestows His grace according to the state and the occupations to which He has called each individual, and it is in the same way that He gives special graces and helps, which are called, "the grace of vocation."[3] These helps He does not give to others who are differently situated. For instance, to get up during the night, to spend whole hours in choir singing and meditating, to live in strict solitude and silence, to fast often and rigorously, to wear coarse clothing and chastise the body frequently during the week with iron girdles and disciplines, all these things seem terrible and insupportable to a man of the world, and many are horrified when they merely read or hear of such austerities. Yet, a good religious who tries to serve God according to his state, will not think much of these things, although he may naturally be as sensitive as any one else. Why is that? It is the effect of the "grace of vocation," which is given to the religious, and not to the man of the world who is not called to that state by God. On the other hand, many could not endure to have the cries of little children resounding in their ears all day long, to have to wash and dress and carry them about; for my part, I could not stand it a single day. Yet, fathers and mothers have, as a general rule, no difficulty in doing all that: they are quite patient, and have even joy and consolation in it. How is that? It is the effect of the "grace of vocation." Now, I ask you again, how could you serve God in a different state of life, perform your duties and bear incidental

[1] Non ego, sed gratia Dei mecum.—I. Cor. xv. 10.
[2] In vigiliis multis, etc.—II. Cor. xi. 27.
[3] Gratia vocationis.

trials and difficulties better and with greater merit, than you can in the state in which you now are, if God did not give you those special graces? Do you imagine that He would be more generous to you with His helps, if you placed yourself in circumstances in which He does not wish you to be, than He now is when you are in the state that His providence has allotted you? I do not think so. If you are now so slothful and careless, in spite of the many graces of state you receive, in all probability you would be much worse if you were situated otherwise, and therefore, instead of serving God better, you would neglect Him more than you now do.

Therefore, each one can serve God best in his appointed state.

Remain, therefore, as you are, and where you are, according to the will of God; be content with your state, and give up those useless complaints and anxious desires by which you merely torment yourself, and cannot do the least good. If you really mean what you say, and are sincerely desirous of serving God better, and doing more good, then begin in your appointed state, and show that you are in earnest. Perform your daily tasks and duties with a good intention, which you must renew often during the day, for God's sake; bear incidental difficulties and trials with patience; do all you can to avoid mortal sin, at all events, and if your state exposes you to dangers of sin that you cannot avoid, call upon the Almighty with humility and constancy to help you, and do not go into such occasions without necessity. If you do that you will serve God in the best possible way, and it is, in fact, the only way to serve Him properly. For, you cannot serve God by wishing to do what is not suited to the state appointed for you by Him. As we shall see in the

Second Part.

In what the service of God consists.

To serve God, do good, live piously, save one's soul, and go to Heaven, in what does that consist? How is it to be done? Is it only by prayer, meditation, going to church, watching, fasting, giving alms, visiting the sick and those who are in prison, and chastising the body, as many simple-minded persons think, who imagine that the service of God and true piety consist only in such things? Oh, if that were the case, we should be badly off indeed! The most of us would have reason enough to be discontented and to complain. And what would sick and delicate people then do? How could they come to Church or pray, and how could they then serve God and save their souls? And

the poor and needy, what hope would be for them, for they receive alms and cannot give any? You, too, who are engaged in the public service, and who must be always writing and studying; you merchants, who must be always in business; you workmen, who have to spend the day in your work-shops; you laborers, who continually toil in the gardens and fields, woe to you, indeed, if that were the case, for you could give only the least part of your time to God, and what would then become of your souls? Is it really Thy wish, O Lord, that all men should go to Heaven? Art Thou sincere in commanding them to do good, and to serve Thee faithfully to the end of their lives? But if so, why hast Thou made so many different states of life amongst men, and placed so many people in such circumstances that it is almost impossible for them to serve Thee always? Clearly, then, my dear brethren, the service of God must necessarily consist in something else, that all men under all circumstances can fulfil and observe perfectly. And such is really the case.

Shown by a simile.

If you ask me, then, in what, I will let you answer yourselves. There are two maid-servants in your house. You say to one, Stay in the room and mind the child, and to the other, Go into the garden and dig. Both are ready to obey, and they do what you tell them. Now, which of the two servants does your will? Both of them, you will answer. But why? Neither has been attending on you; one was sitting by the fire in an easy-chair, amusing herself with the child, the other was digging in the garden and did not, perhaps, think of you the whole time; is that serving you? Yes, certainly, you answer, because they both did what I told them. And you are quite right. But suppose that one of them got tired of digging, came into the room and said: I am so fond of my mistress, that I cannot bear to be away from her; I will remain with her and attend to her, and we can hold a friendly conversation with each other. What would you think of that? Would that servant obey you better thus, than if she had remained in the garden? What are you talking about? you would say to her; I did not hire you to love your mistress so much; I do not want your conversation nor your attendance; if I required you, I should have called you; go back and do as you are told, if you really wish to be obedient, and to respect me. But, the servant would say, the other maid can sit by the fire; Iam able to do that as well as she; let me change with her, and she can see what it is to dig in the garden. You

would not argue long with a servant like that. Go, you would say, and do what I told you; the other must remain as she is, because such is my will; if you do not obey me, you are no servant of mine. Quite right again, but you have now answered the first question.

It consists in fulfilling the divine will.

Serving God and doing good consists in nothing else than in doing, omitting, and suffering whatever, however, and whenever God wills each one to do, to omit, and to suffer. The Lord God has many servants and hand-maids, to whom He has given different states in life. He is not in need of any of them, and He places His exterior glory in having His creatures do as He wishes them. Whatever He requires from them, be it great or small, prayer or labor, little or much, it is well done, if done according to His will. This is the only source of all our virtue and piety and holiness of life, and we must always act like the servant of whom the centurion says in the Gospel: "I say to one, go, and he goeth; and to another, come, and he cometh; and to my servant, do this, and he doth it."[1] He who neglects this, does not serve God at all. Why? Because he refuses to do what God has commanded him, as I shall prove more in detail hereafter, although it is so evident that any sensible man might see it for himself.

Which is done by each one fulfilling what God requires from him in his state of life.

And still you come with your discontent and your anxious desires: I wish I was a priest! I wish I was unmarried! I wish I was richer! I wish I was this, I wish I was that! I could then serve God better, and have more opportunity and time to do good and to save my soul. How can that be? Are the years longer for priests and others, than for you in your state of life? Have they more than twenty-four hours in their days and nights? No, you say, but they have more hours to devote to prayer and divine service, than I who have so many cares, so much work to occupy me, so that I have hardly an hour in the day to give to God. So that you imagine, after all, that the only time given to God is what you spend in prayer and works of devotion, and you act like the servant who refused to work in the garden and wished to be near her mistress; you, too, wish to be always near your Lord in prayer. I admit that the ecclesiastical state is much holier and more perfect in itself, than the secular state, but it is so only for those who are called to it. Certainly, oh, good God, I and many others have great reason to thank Thee

[1] Dico huic: Vade, et vadit; et alio: Veni, et venit; et servo meo: Fac hoc, et facit.—Luke vii. 8.

most humbly every day for the vocation Thou hast given us. And woe to me if I do not work with that great grace and live according to my holy state! But, if Thou hadst not wished me to serve Thee in this state; if Thou hadst decreed me to be a shoe-maker, a charcoal-burner, or a chimney-sweep, or that I should earn my living by digging or other work, would I not have served Thee just as well, oh, my God, if I had been content with Thy decree, and had done Thy will to the best of my power? There is not the least doubt of it, and I should not serve Thee if I had not done Thy will in the way appointed by Thee. Such is the case, my dear brethren. A religious consecrated to God, sits or kneels for many hours, day and night, in choir, singing the praises of God; his day is all marked out for him; part of it he must spend in meditation, part in vocal prayer, or in spiritual reading, or in other good works, according to the rule. He does a good work whenever he does any of those things zealously and with a proper intention. He serves God; but why? Why is his work good? Because he does what God wishes him to do. The father of a family looks after his domestic concerns; the mother minds her children; the lawyer studies and manages the cases intrusted to him; the tradesman works with his hammer, thread, needle, etc.; the servant waits upon his master, the maid sweeps the house; the poor man begs his bread from door to door; the sick man sits in an easy chair, and eats dainty food. Are not all these doing good, too, and serving God? Who can doubt it? provided only that they have a good conscience and a proper intention. Why? Because they perform what is expected of them; they do what God wishes them to do. But, you say, their occupations are not spiritual, like those of religious. No matter, as long as they fulfil the will of God, they do enough.

To leave this and do something else, although it is better in itself, is wrong, and displeasing to God.

Or do you think that you are bound to do all the good things you see others doing? Very well, if so; come along, fathers and mothers, let your house look after itself, it will not run away from you; come into the choir and sing the office with the religous; let your children cry as much as they please; the praise of God and the salvation of your soul have the first claims on your attention! You lawyers and councillors, when you go into court or to the council-chamber, take Thomas à Kempis under your arm, and let your legal documents lie where they are; you can consult them if a question arises. Read your Imitation of Christ, and if any one says anything to you, tell him you must do good

and save your souls. You shop-keepers, kneel down behind the counter and say the office of the Immaculate Conception, and if a customer comes in, tell him that he must wait till you have finished your prayers, because you must serve God! In the same way, you workmen and servants, carry your rosaries in your hands, and if your masters tell you to work, you must answer them: Prayer is more important; I must first say the rosary a dozen times and work for my soul. That would suit you admirably, would it not? It is far easier than working. But you think it would be too ridiculous. And I am of the same opinion; it would be just as if one expected the blacksmith to work with a needle, or the tailor with a hammer. Not less ridiculous is the complaint of some: I cannot do what others do, I have not the time, etc. No, you cannot, and what is more, you must not do it. What have you to do with the works of others? You are not expected to perform them. We are strange creatures indeed! We desire to do what we should not, and have a great reluctance to perform what our duty requires of us. If God had wished you to serve Him in a different manner, He would have appointed a different state for you. Do now what your state requires of you; pray when the time comes for prayer; work when it is time to work; go to Church, if your duties do not prevent you; give alms and do works of mercy, if you have the means and opportunities. Let each one do what his state requires of him; let him do it well, as God expects him to do it, and let him do it with a good intention, because God requires it of him. That is quite enough. In that way every one can do good, and serve God as He wishes to be served; in that way all will work out their salvation according to the divine will.

Although the occupations of many states are vile, yet God requires no others from them.

Ah, thinks another, I must occupy myself the whole day with vile and despicable things, to support myself and my family. How can I please God thereby? The surest sign of the divine will is the fact that you are forced to engage in such occupations (for He could easily free you from them if He wished), and that He has commanded you to support yourself and your family thereby. Therefore, if you do willingly and patiently what you are forced to do, and offer it up with a good conscience and a pure intention to God, because it is His will, who can deny that God is pleased with your work? Hear what St. Dorothæus writes of his disciple Dositheus:[1] The latter, since, through bodily weakness, he could not observe the order of the day like the others in

[1] Bibl.—SS. PP. Tom. 3.

the monastery (for he could not rise in the morning, nor work, nor eat, nor drink like the others), in order to do something for God's sake gave himself up completely, in obedience, to one of his superiors, who ordered him to attend to the sick now and then, when he was able to do so. Dositheus obeyed humbly and readily for five years, when he died of consumption. God revealed to the Abbot of the monastery that the young Dositheus was as high in glory as St. Paul and St. Anthony. The other monks began to complain when they heard this; they said: "Where is, then, Thy justice, oh, Lord?"[1] Thou hast made like to us, nay, even superior to us, a man who was brought up in comfort, who never fasted, nor chastised his body, nor interrupted his night's rest, while we have to bear the whole burden of religious observance by day and night. What greater reward can we hope for all our labor and trouble, than Dositheus, who has done hardly anything in comparison to us, has already gained in Heaven? for Thou hast made him equal in glory to the greatest Saints. And God answered them, saying: His obedience merited more, in a short time, than all the austerities of many others. Dositheus did what he had to do, and what his superior commanded him. I have not required him to fast, watch, nor chastise his body, because his health did not permit; he performed a service most pleasing to Me, because he did well and zealously what I wished him to do. Let us all take this to ourselves. Do well what your state requires, God will certainly not expect any more from you; nay, besides the keeping His commandments, He cannot expect any more; He must be satisfied with that. For, what father who has taught his son nothing but a trade, could reasonably expect that son to write a learned essay for him? And if the father were angry with him for not being able to do it, the son could say: But, father, if you wish me to write such things, you should have sent me to school to study. My trade does not teach me to write fine essays; but as far as my trade is concerned, I am at your service. Certainly, if, on the last day, God were to require from a man more than belonged to his state and circumstances, that man could answer that he had done well the work which had been appointed for him on earth. For instance, if God were to ask a poor man why he did not give more alms, the man might answer: Lord, Thou hast given me poverty as my portion; I have had to live on alms, or by my labor, but I have been content with Thy will. Why have you lost

[1] Ubinam ergo justitia tua, Domine?

Mass and missed the sermon so often on Sundays and holy-days? He will ask another. Lord, Thou hast given me sickness as my portion; the doctor and my confessor, whom Thou hast commanded me to obey, told me to remain at home. I have borne my pain and weakness with patience for Thy sake; what more could I do? Why have you not meditated every day on heavenly things? He will ask a simple plough-man. Lord, Thou hast not taught me how to meditate. I have tried to learn all I could from sermons and catechism, and to live according to what I have heard; I have offered up all my daily labors to Thee, because Thou hast told me to do so. Why have you not gone forth to labor for my honor and glory, and to gain souls for Me? Lord, the father of a family will answer, Thou hast given me no talent for that; Thou hast imposed a different duty on me. I have worked for Thy honor and glory by being content with my state, according to Thy decree, by doing my duty to please Thee, and by being diligent in exhorting my children and servants to do Thy will. Why have you not heard Mass oftener, and performed more works of piety? Lord, the servant will answer: "Thou hast set men over our heads;"[1] I could not do as I wished: my master and mistress told me to stay at home and work; whenever I was allowed, I heard Mass every day, and I did everything with a good intention. Now, my dear brethren, what fault can God find with such answers? He will and must be satisfied with them. Nay, if all those works are performed in the state of grace, and those people die in that state, He must reward every one of them eternally, according to His promise in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "Then will He render to every man according to his works."[2] Mark those words, "according to his works," not according to the works of another. Oh, if every one only did well what his state requires, what a pleasing service would be rendered to God all over the world!

Conclusion and instruction as to how each one is to serve God daily in his state.

Let us all begin, therefore, to-day, my dear brethren, to serve our God with fresh zeal, and let each one be satisfied with his state and with the divine decree! This should be our good intention every morning: My Lord and my God, behold me, Thy servant, ready to do whatever is pleasing to Thee! Thou hast placed me in this state; I thank Thee most humbly for it; I am satisfied with it, no matter what it is. These labors, cares, occupations, annoyances, and trials will likely be my lot to-day; I will accept

[1] Imposuisti homines super capita nostra.—Ps. lxv. 12.
[2] Tunc reddet unicuique secundum opera ejus.—Matth. xvi. 27.

and endure them to Thy greater honor and glory, because such is Thy will. I rejoice with my whole heart, that Thou hast so many faithful servants in the world, who will praise and honor Thee on this day with holy occupations, which I have not time for, since my daily duties are far more lowly. Nevertheless, I know that Thou wilt not despise what I do, but receive it from me with pleasure, for I can do nothing more pleasing to Thee than that which Thou wishest me to do. And that my daily work may please Thee all the more, I unite it with the works of Jesus Christ Thy Son, who spent the greater part of His life as a poor carpenter in the work-shop, and did as much for Thy glory in that state, as He afterwards did by His preaching and miracles. Instead of saying long prayers, I will often raise my heart to Thee during my daily labor, and say: I do this for Thy sake, O Lord, because it is pleasing to Thee! All for Thy honor and glory! Give me grace to perform all the duties of my state with zeal and diligence, according to Thy holy will, and keep me from all sin! Such should be your resolution, my dear brethren, and you should do your best to keep it. That is the way to serve God, to do good, to be pious, and to gain Heaven. Amen.

SIXTY-EIGHTH SERMON.

ON THE CONTENTMENT OF EACH ONE IN HIS STATE OF LIFE AS FAR AS THE DANGERS OF THE SOUL ARE CONCERNED.

Subject.

Every one must be content with the divine decree in his state of life, as far as the unavoidable dangers of the soul are concerned.—*Preached on the Feast of St. Matthias, Apostle.*

Text.

Ita, Pater; quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te.—Matth. xi. 26. "Yea, Father: for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight."

Introduction.

It is I, then, oh, my God, who must take the place of the Apostle Judas, and be reckoned in the number of those to whom Thou hast said: "Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves;"[1] they will drive you from one city to another, they will accuse you in the synagogues, bind, imprison, and scourge you; he who kills you will think he does a service to God; you will be hated by all men for my Name's sake. Am I then to be of their number? "Yea, heavenly Father," I am satisfied, "for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight."[2] Thou canst dispose of me as Thou wilt. Send me forth whither Thou wilt, to declare Thy name and Thy glory; amongst Jews, heathens, barbarians, I care not where; my life is devoted to Thy honor! I am ready for labor and toil, for all sorts of persecutions and trials, to shed my blood, to suffer martyrdom, and a violent death, I refuse nothing: "For so hath it seemed good in Thy sight;" may Thy will be always done in me! Thus said the holy Apostle St. Matthias; and if he did not use those exact words, at least he proved, by his works, his readiness to do God's will in all things. Therefore, it is not without cause that the Catholic Church selects the Gospel read to-day for the feast of this Apostle, for he was elected as an Apostle by a visible mark of the divine will. As we read in the Acts of the Apostles, a hundred and twenty persons had assembled to see who was to be chosen for the apostleship in place of the traitor Judas; none of them ventured to give a vote until they had invoked the Holy Ghost with these words: "Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two Thou hast chosen; . . . . and the lot fell upon Matthias."[3] "Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight." With the same conformity to the divine will and pleasure, he afterwards went to the countries allotted to him; first to Judea, amongst the Jews, who hated the Christian name, then to Morocco, amongst barbarians and heathens, where, as a reward for his labor in spreading the glory of Jesus Christ, he was first stoned and then beheaded. He was quite ready for everything: "Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight." What a beautiful example St.

[1] Ecce ego mitto vos sicut oves in medio luporum.—Matth. x. 16.

[2] Ita, Pater; quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te.

[3] Tu Domine, qui corda nosti omnium, ostende, quem elegeris etc. . . . . et cecidit sors super Matthiam.—Acts i. 24, 26.

Matthias gives us, my dear brethren! How so? We cannot become Apostles and travel through the world to preach the Gospel to Jews and heathens, and further the glory of God; it is not every one who can do that. Nor can we be stoned to death or beheaded for Christ's sake; and many, in fact, would not willingly undergo that martyrdom. Yet there is one thing we can all do, after the Saint's example, to further the glory of God every day of our lives; and what is that? We can be satisfied with and resigned to the will of God in all circumstances and occurrences, and no matter how things go with us in this life, we can always think and say: "Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight." I have already more than once tried to encourage you to be thus satisfied in your different states of life, my dear brethren. Besides the mental and bodily troubles that are inseparable from different states, there are dangers and difficulties that affect the soul and its salvation, which give many, especially pious Christians, occasion for uneasiness and anxiety in their state, so that they wish to be situated differently. But even in these, each one can and must be peaceful and contented, because it so pleases God and has been so arranged by His providence for every one. As I shall prove in the present instruction.

Plan of Discourse.

Every one must be content with the divine decree in his state of life, as far as the unavoidable dangers of the soul are concerned. Such is the whole subject.

I rely on the divine help, through the intercession of Mary and the holy angels guardian, and thou, oh, holy Apostle Matthias, who bringest so many people from distant places every year to honor thy relics; obtain for us, who are here assembled in thy honor, the grace to conform our wills always to the will of God, so that in all difficulties of soul and body, we may think and say from our hearts: "Yea, Father," etc.

The dangers of the soul consist in the occasions of sin.

The difficulties and dangers that assail our souls and our salvation are the different occasions of and allurements to evil, the temptations to various kinds of sin, and the difficulties we meet with in the service of God, which could make us abandon it, and so fill us with a just fear of losing our souls and of going to hell for all eternity. Such are certain circumstances which

excite us sometimes to anger, impatience, cursing and swearing, sometimes to injustice, avarice, injuring our neighbor, or to pride and vanity, to impurity and carnal love, to gluttony and drunkenness, so that, as we are drawn with a kind of violence, we sin easily and frequently in those different ways, unless we are vigilant and resist the temptation with all our might.

Which make life a burden to many.

Ah, that is the very thing that makes me uneasy day and night, and causes me to be discontented with my state! is the complaint of many. I would readily be satisfied with everything, if I had not daily, at all times, in all places, so many dangerous occasions of sin to guard against. For, what is the married life but a continual source of impatience, cursing and swearing, quarrelling and strife? The husband is given to anger and intemperance, the wife is idle and fond of amusement; the disobedient children will not listen to what is said to them; the servants are lazy and obstinate; they must be told to do a thing twenty times before they stir; one would almost be obliged to have other servants to look after them. The neighbors are devoured with curiosity to know everything that happens; they often find fault with and misinterpret one's acts; one's own friends and relations can hardly be trusted, for they talk here and there and say many thing to others behind one's back, that are not well meant. Who could preserve patience and meekness under such circumstances? Who could keep from sinning through anger, cursing, or swearing? What is my poverty and hard, laborious life, but a school of sorrow and despair? What is my employment but a temptation to injustice, unless I am very careful? One has to deal with all sorts of people, to hear all kinds of talk, to see all kinds of dangerous and seductive objects. Who can guard himself and keep his senses always under control, so that he does not sometimes sin with the tongue, or at all events consent to an unlawful thought or desire? Besides, it is well known that the devil attacks one with various great temptations, and that he presents all kinds of horrid pictures to the imagination. In a word, wherever you turn, you find occasion to do evil and to lose your soul; you cannot help committing sin!

Therefore, some unjustly blame their state for all their sins.

But what nonsense to talk like that! It is a mere excuse that some people make, when they are warned to give up the evil habits that are to them an occasion of sin. They say without hesitation that their state and condition in life are to blame; that they have so many opportunities of evil, that it seems almost im-

possible for them to keep from grievous sin. Nay, they even go so far as to commit sin and think nothing of it; so that often when they go to confession they say: I have done nothing wrong, but the ordinary daily sins. And what are they? Anger, impatience, cursing, swearing. And is it not worth while to mention them particularly? Oh, but I cannot help committing them, on account of my state and circumstances at home. What? Instead of blaming your state, you should blame your own unmortified will, that refuses to correct a bad habit. There have been holy emperors, kings and princes, lawyers and public officials, merchants and shop-keepers, citizens and married people, peasants and beggars, who led pious lives amidst the many dangers, annoyances, and temptations of their different states. And in our own days, if the consciences of men were laid bare before us, we should find good and zealous Christians who so live in the midst of similar circumstances, dangers, and temptations, that for several years they do not commit one grievous sin. Why should you be compelled to sin, more than they? No, there is no temptation, no occasion, no devil, nor number of devils, that can force you against your will. If you kept God always before your mind, if you remembered, with a lively faith, that all the outward troubles and annoyances, which you blame for your sins, proceed principally from God Himself, and are appointed for you by His providence, you would resign yourself to His will with more meekness and patience, and the divine grace would keep you from sin in all those occasions and dangers, which are actually decreed by the Almighty for your greater good.

Each state has, by divine decree, its dangers and occasions of evil.

And do you think, perhaps, that your state is the only one that is exposed to dangers of this kind? Or do you imagine that if you were in another state that you desire, you would find fewer dangers? Oh, certainly not! Poor mortals that we are, not one of us can boast of being free from them! Job says: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare."[1] The warfare is general, no one is exempt from it, it never ends until, after having conquered, we enjoy the repose of Heaven. No state so holy, no Order so strict, no place so pure, that countless temptations and dangers of sin cannot find their way into it. Even St. Jerome, in the desert, amidst constant watching, fasting, and mortification, had no rest from them day or night. St. Paul, although he saw the third Heaven, was tormented constantly by the demon of the

[1] Militia est vita hominis super terram.—Job vii. 1.

flesh. If one were to try to escape from all outward occasions of temptation, by hiding himself in some corner between four walls, he would still have a source of temptation in himself, for wherever he goes he brings his own flesh with him, and in that is nourished the cause of temptations that may ruin him forever; or else he will have enough to do to combat the devil, who goes about like a roaring lion, and leaves no one at rest in his efforts to destroy souls. In fact, if we wished to avoid all dangers and seductions to evil, we should leave this life, as the Apostle says. Such is the will of the God of infinite wisdom, for all states and circumstances of life, that He may thereby prove our virtue, and excite us to be watchful and make us fly to His paternal care for refuge, with humility and confidence. He thus wishes us to storm Heaven, and carry it away by violence. For, since tyrants and persecutors are not always to be found, and we have not the opportunity of being martyred for the faith, these temptations and dangers, that must be overcome by patient resistance, take the place of martyrdom. So that they are general, because such is the will of God; no one, therefore, has a right to complain of them, or to be dissatisfied on their account with the divine decree.

They who have more numerous and greater dangers to contend with, must still be content with the divine decree.

Still, I admit that, while each state, no matter how holy it is, has its own dangers and temptations, yet some states have much more numerous and grievous ones than others. Now, if God calls you to such a state, to contend with occasions from which others are exempt; if He wishes you to overcome greater difficulties, and to use greater violence than others, to gain Heaven, dare you, or can you find fault with Him, or ask Him why He does so? I would not advise you to do that, but rather to say with the high-priest Heli: "It is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His sight."[1] He is the Lord, who can do only what is good. He can give His Heaven at any price that He wishes to put upon it. If He required a thousand times more difficulty and labor, Heaven would be worth it all. Can He not give the penny that He paid to those who worked a whole day in his vineyard, also to those who worked only an hour, although the former had far more trouble and labor than the latter?

Explained by a simile.

A soldier in war time must always be ready, either to fight in battle, or to sit idle in winter quarters. He may be lying asleep in his tent, but as soon as he hears the signal for attack, he springs

[1] Dominus est, quod bonum est in oculis suis, faciat.—I. Kings iii. 18.

up at once, and goes wherever his officer tells him. The soldiers who are in the van are certainly in greater danger than those who are in the rear, and yet the general in command orders a certain regiment to lead the attack; nor would there be any use in the soldiers of that regiment complaining, because they are more exposed than the others. That is the will of him who commands the army and arranges the battle. The soldiers must obey, and the greater the danger, the braver they should be, and the greater will be their glory when the battle is ended. Nay, generally it is the oldest regiment that claims the right to be first in the van, where the fight is thickest, nor does it readily give up that right to others. My dear brethren, "the life of man upon earth is a warfare."[1] As long as we mortals live on this earth, we are always engaged in a dangerous combat, in which we have to fight for eternal life, and we must either win or lose it. Some of us are placed in the van, others in the centre, others in the rear; that is, in greater or lesser dangers, as the general thinks fit; but all are so placed that they can conquer if they choose. Now this great General has placed you, by His providence, in the state and in all the circumstances of the state in which you are. He knows well, and has foreseen from all eternity, the occasions, dangers, allurements, and temptations to evil that you are to meet with in that state, at all times, and under all circumstances. He knows, too, your strength, and how much you can do. He says also, by His Apostle St. Paul: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able," nor will He place over you a burden too heavy for you to bear, "but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it."[2] If, then, the dangers of your state appear to you to be greater than those of other states, why should you find fault with what you cannot change? You must say with Heli: "It is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His sight,"[3] God wills it so. You must be satisfied and fight against the temptations and dangers as well as you can, with His help, which will never be wanting to you, if you appeal to Him with confidence. Say, therefore, in such circumstances: "Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight."[4] I

[1] Militia est vita hominis super terram.

[2] Fidelis autem Deus est, qui non patietur vos tentari supra id, quod potestis, sed faciet etiam cum tentatione proventum, ut possitis sustinere.—I. Cor. x. 13.

[3] Dominus est, quod bonum est in oculis suis, faciat.

[4] Ita, Pater: quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te.

will fight as well as I can, only do Thou help me, for I rely on Thy grace and assistance!

The sins committed on account of those dangers, do not come from the state, but from the malice of men.

Ah, you say, but I am so weak; I am so often overcome by impatience that I sin almost daily; I always propose to be watchful, and not to curse or swear so wickedly, or to offend God in the least, but all to no purpose! It is always the same! If I go a hundred times to confession, I always have the same sins and daily faults. That certainly would not be the case if I had not so many occasions to sin, or if I were in another state of life. Certainly, it is very wrong for you to commit so many sins; God has never decreed that. But what is to blame for it? Is it an occupation or business that you can give up? If so, and if you find that, no matter what you do, you still commit grievous sin, then it becomes a proximate occasion for you, and you must abandon it, no matter what it costs. Is it your state, which according to divine command you cannot change, such as the ecclesiastical or the married state? Then, as I said before, your own will is alone to blame, and not the state in which God has commanded you to remain, to use the proper means to avoid sin by His grace, which He will not refuse you, and to be diligent in overcoming temptations.

In another state, one would sin more grievously, although the dangers are less.

Besides, how do you know that you would not commit so much sin in another state? Perhaps, nay, likely you would be much worse therein, and would lose your soul; so that it is better for you, so to speak, that you now and then sin through anger and impatience, on account of weakness (although it is never good to sin), than to commit far more grievous sins in another state to which God has not called you, although the dangers of that state are less in themselves. Mark my words: I say, dangers less in themselves, because the greatness of the danger or temptation must not be measured by what it is in itself, but by what the person is whom it assails, and by the help that God gives. For instance, there is an opportunity of gaining a hundred dollars unjustly, and also of gaining ten dollars in the same manner, without being detected. Which danger is the greater, and the more likely to lead one to theft? Certainly the first, because a hundred dollars excite greater cupidity than ten, and yet, the first is less dangerous for a rich man, than the second would be for a poor beggar. Why? Because according to the difference of state, ten dollars are more for a poor man, than a hundred for a rich man; and if the rich man is pious he will have no difficulty in giving up the chance of making the hundred dollars

unjustly, while the poor man, if he is not very good, will be quite ready to sell his soul for the ten dollars. Even the same man who can withstand a severe temptation, if he were in other circumstances, would yield to a much weaker one. We experience that in ourselves daily. Many a one who conquers a violent temptation to anger and hatred, and who forgives his enemy for the love of God, according to the law of Jesus Christ, bursts out into a violent passion for some worthless thing, or at a slight contradiction from a well-meaning friend. How often does it not happen that a person who has been violently tempted to impurity for many years, and has fought valiantly and preserved his chastity, allows himself to be seduced by a chance occasion that is far less dangerous than his former temptations? Joseph conquered in a long-continued and grievous temptation, that came from the wife of his own master; David, a holy man, after God's own heart, was betrayed by a chance look into becoming an adulterer, and a murderer. Perhaps Joseph would have fallen, like David, in the lesser occasion, and David, like Joseph, would have overcome in the greater.

Which no one can know.

So that, although the dangers in one state are less than in another, how do you know that they would be less for you? You who now, with the help of God, keep your soul for months free from grievous sin, in the midst of the dangers and occasions of evil to which your state exposes you, even you, I say, would perhaps, in other circumstances, yield to the least temptations and lose your soul; especially if you are not in the place and state in which God wishes you to be. Put a fish into a silver vessel filled with the best wine, and it will soon die, but throw it into even the dirtiest water and it will live. Why? Because water is its proper element, and has been assigned to it by the Author of nature; it can live, therefore, in water, but not in wine, although the latter is more costly. The same thing would happen to you and me, if we were to change with each other; if you took my place and I yours, against the will of God, I would not be strong enough to bear up against the difficulties of your position, nor could you overcome the temptations of mine. Why so? Because God has allotted your state to you and mine to me, in His inscrutable designs, and He has also determined what helps and graces He will give to every one according to his state and the dangers of it. There are many occasions and companions that a layman can frequent in the course of his business, without any injury to his conscience, because he cannot avoid them; but if I were to expose

myself to them without necessity, or without being obliged to do so by ordinary courtesy or Christian charity, I should likely fall at once. Why? Because I would go out of my proper place, and therefore could not expect a special help or grace from God to avoid sin in such circumstances.

Therefore, we must all be satisfied with the will of God in our appointed states, and use the proper means to avoid sin, such as humble and trustful prayer.

Therefore, let us all be satisfied with our appointed states and be resigned to the will of God. This one thought alone should be enough for us: "Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight."[1] Thou hast done, and done well, too, for every one as Thou hast wished and known it to be for his greater good! The more we know of the dangers and opportunities of sin that we are exposed to in our state of life, the more careful should we be not to rush into other unnecessary dangers through want of reflection; for it is in that that our chief fault and the chief cause of our sins are to be found.

In the daily occasions that we cannot avoid nor prevent we must use these salutary means to protect ourselves: first, we must confess our weakness with great humility, for we can do nothing without the divine help, but also with unimpaired cheerfulness and childlike confidence in God, to whom we must often send up aspirations during the day, firmly believing that He will not allow us to commit a mortal sin. For Jesus Christ has promised, not once, but several times in the Gospel, that He will refuse nothing to him who, with firm confidence, asks Him for something useful to salvation. Believe, and it shall be done unto you.[2] Even if we sometimes fall through weakness, we must not, therefore, lose courage, but rather acknowledge and humbly repent of our sin, and begin with fresh zeal to combat our inordinate inclinations and desires; like him who, fighting with another, receives a severe blow, and is only made more courageous by it.

Recollection of the presence of God.

Secondly, we must accustom ourselves to remember God in all our daily actions, and to keep ourselves in His presence. That we can easily do during our work, and in the midst of the most weighty occupations, by a passing thought or an aspiration; for the mind is not induced to commit sin, unless it loses sight of God, and it is almost an impossibility for one who is at all pious, to commit a grievous sin deliberately, when he has a lively remembrance that the Almighty God is present, looking at him.

Frequent confession.

The third means consists of frequent and worthy confession to

[1] Ita, Pater: quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te.

[2] Credite, et evenient vobis.—Mark xi. 24.

the same enlightened confessor. That includes also the evening examination of conscience, in which we examine and detest the faults and sins we have committed during the day, with a firm resolution to amend them ; a practice that good and pious Christians never omit. A garden cannot run to waste when the weeds are plucked up every day ; and in the same way, a bad habit must be corrected, when the conscience is daily cleansed and purified.

Good use of the morning time.

Finally, we must not forget that after our night's rest, we must give the beginning of the day to God alone, to whom belongs our first and most important business. As the day is well or ill begun, so, generally speaking, will it be throughout, and they who say their morning prayers devoutly, will certainly find that they will have a special inclination and encouragement to be good during the day, as well as great consolation and joy in the Lord in everything they do. If I were to ask such people whether what I say is true, I know from experience that they would confirm every word of it. It is useful also, after having made the good intention, to recall briefly the occasions of sin that we are likely to meet with during the day in our ordinary occupations, namely, the places we are likely to be in, the persons we have to deal with, the business we have to do, the annoyances and troubles that await us, the faults and sins we usually commit, and then to make a firm resolution, and say : Now I will be careful not to commit a deliberate sin in any of those circumstances ; I would rather die to-day than offend God and lose Him by mortal sin. If we forget our resolution and commit a fault ; for instance, if in a moment of anger, a curse bursts forth from our lips, we must strike our breasts, or else say in our own minds with heartfelt sorrow : God be merciful to me a sinner ; and then renew our good resolution. That we may keep this resolution all the better, we must recommend it to God, with childlike confidence, in the following or similar words : See, O Lord, Thou knowest what my state of life is, and the many dangers and occasions of offending Thee to which I am exposed ; but Thou knowest, too, that I do not seek them wilfully. It is in accordance with Thy decree, my Lord and my God, that I live in this state and avoid these dangers. "Yea, Father ; for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight."[1] Thou knowest also my weakness and misery, and that I cannot resist any temptation, unless Thou comest to my assistance. But Thou wilt help me, because Thou hast promised to do so ! I will co-operate with Thee, as far as I can, and I

[1] Ita, Pater ; quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te.

confide altogether in Thy fatherly care. Let what Thou wilt happen to me this day, one only request I make of Thee: Do not permit me to offend Thee, my loving Father, and my Supreme Good, by a mortal sin! Then I shall be always content with Thy holy will and decree. Amen.

SIXTY-NINTH SERMON.

ON THE CHILDLIKE CONFIDENCE WITH WHICH EVERY ONE OUGHT TO ABANDON HIMSELF TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

Subject.

Nothing more reasonable, or more conducive to true happiness, than to abandon ourselves with childlike confidence to divine providence.—*Preached on the Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord.*

Text.

Ecce, magi ab Oriente venerunt.—Matth. ii. 1.
"Behold, there came wise men from the East."

Introduction.

A wonderful journey that was! "Behold, there came wise men." Were they really very clever? Where did they come from? From the far-off East. Where were they going to? To Jerusalem. For what purpose? To adore the new-born Saviour of the world. But where were they to find Him? They knew not. So that they were going, they knew not where, to see, they knew not whom. They ask about Him: "Where is He?"[1] They should have found that out before undertaking such a long journey. They seek Him in Jerusalem; perhaps He is elsewhere. They come to a certain place, and perhaps they are going away from Him all the time. How long will they have to wander about before they find Him? They know not; perhaps they will never find Him. Would it not have been more prudent to have sent their servants on beforehand to make inquiries, and to have awaited their return before setting out? es-

[1] Ubi est?—Matth. ii. 2.

pecially since it was in winter time that they had to leave their own countries to undertake a difficult journey. But the three wise kings never thought of all these things; they had seen the star as a sign of the new-born Saviour, and they accepted the invitation to come and adore Him; they required nothing more. Without delay they set out, not having even a guide, for the star they had seen in the East did not appear to them again until they had left Jerusalem, as the Gospel says: "Who having heard the king, went their way; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East, went before them."[1] The difficulties and length of the journey, and the uncertainty of finding the place, did not frighten them from their purpose. They trusted completely in God alone; He, they thought, who has called us by the star, will no doubt bring us to the right place. They left all the care of themselves to Him. Truly, my dear brethren, they acted wisely, prudently, and sensibly. Oh, how their example shames our pusillanimity, our want of faith and confidence in God! How it condemns our inordinate and excessive cares, anxieties, fears, and uneasiness, our useless troubles and apprehensions, our desperate efforts to provide everything that concerns our bodies and souls, our earthly lives, our state and our welfare, as if there were no one in the world to take care of us but ourselves, as if there were neither God nor providence to look after us! If, like the three wise men, we employed proper diligence, and then placed all our hope in God, and abandoned ourselves with full confidence to His care and providence, things would go far better with us in this pilgrimage to our heavenly fatherland; as I shall show in this sermon.

Plan of Discourse.

Nothing more reasonable, or more conducive to true happiness, than to abandon ourselves with childlike confidence to divine providence. Such is the whole subject.

I prove it at once by relying on the grace and light of the Holy Ghost, which I confidently hope to obtain from Him, through the intercession of Mary, and the help of the holy angels.

We can trust fully in Him who

Where could or ought I to place all my hope and confidence, to whom could I more reasonably intrust myself and all belong-

[1] Qui cum audissent regem, abierunt; et ecce stella, quam viderant in Oriente, antecedebat eos.—Matth. ii. 9.

has knowledge, power, and will to arrange all for our greater good.

ing to me, if not to Him who has a perfect knowledge of me and my condition, who knows exactly what my wants and necessities are, and what is good or bad for me, at all times, in all circumstances, who has also the power of providing me with all I want, and guarding me from all harm, at all times, in all circumstances, and what is still more, whose love and good-will I can be always certain of, knowing that He desires and seeks only to do me good, and to arrange everything for my greatest happiness, both of soul and body? Oh, if I find such a Guardian, I need have no further care! I can rest quietly and allow Him to deal with me as He thinks fit, certain that no evil can happen to me, and that nothing I undertake can turn out badly.

We can find no one like that, among men.

But where can I find such a one? You may search the whole world through, before you find any one who possesses those three qualities. You have, for instance, an important law-suit; to whom do you intrust it? Is it not to the most celebrated lawyer you can find? If one, who has the name of gaining every case he takes in hand, accepts your case, you think that half the care is taken off your shoulders and that your case is as good as gained. Why? Because, you say, he knows what he is doing. And you act sensibly enough in the matter. But you must not be too confident; no matter how clever the lawyer is, since he is only a changeable mortal, he may allow himself to be bribed by your opponent and may protract the case a long time, so that you are as badly off as before. He is not wanting in knowledge and experience, but he is not well inclined to you. A child thinks it is nowhere so safe as in its mother's lap; if it sees a dog, or any other animal running up to it, it flies at once to its mother's arms; if you try to frighten it, it calls out at once for its mother; as long as she is present, or even knows of its danger, it has no more fear. What is the reason of that confidence? Because the child knows that its mother loves it, and would not allow it to be injured. And that, too, is a well-grounded confidence. Still, it often happens that the child cries for a piece of bread, or for a new dress, but the poor mother can only hold out her empty hands and say, with tears: Oh, my child, I have nothing to give you. She is not wanting in knowledge, for she knows well what her child is in need of, nor is she wanting in good will, for she is anxious to help him; but she cannot, she has not the power to do so. Many a poor, oppressed subject thinks he would be all right if he could only manage to present his lord with a petition, setting forth his grievances. Why?

Oh, he thinks, such a rich man can have no difficulty in making a slight concession in my favor; he can easily do it, and besides, he is well known as a good and kind lord. Still the poor man remains as badly off. Why? Because, though his lord would willingly help him, he knows nothing of him, he cannot always know how his poor subjects are getting on. And so it is always with us in this life: some know how to help, but cannot; others can, but know not how; others know how and can help, but are unwilling to do so; and if we find one who has all three qualities, yet he will not be able to extend them to all times, places, and circumstances. Oh, certainly it is an ill-grounded confidence that is placed in any mortal!

But in God.

So that I must not rest my hopes in this world, but seek some one in Heaven, in whom I can reasonably and certainly place my whole confidence. And who else is that, but the almighty, all-wise, and infinitely good God? Christ our Lord, when exhorting us, in the Gospel of St. Matthew, to have no care for the morrow, nor for food, drink, or clothing, but to place all our confidence in our heavenly Father, intrusting ourselves and all we have to His providence, uses these brief but impressive words: "For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things."[1] God knows all your wants; you need not fear that He will forget them. The Father, that is, the Creator of all things, who has Heaven and earth in His power, knows them; be assured, then, that He can provide for and help you in your misery. Your Father knows and can do all things; you cannot doubt, therefore, of His goodness and love; you must believe that He arranges everything for your greater good.

He knows everything, and where and how anything is good or bad for us.

Let us meditate a little, my dear brethren, on these three words, "your Father knoweth."[2] God knows everything that concerns us—what we want, and what is necessary to us; who can doubt of that? What could be hidden from Him? St. Paul says: "All things are naked and open to His eyes;"[3] all, without exception, great and small. His intellect is not overpowered by the multitude of things, nor is it confused by their variety, nor does the insignificance of a thing exclude it from His care and providence. He cares for me and for each one in particular, says St. Augustine, as if He were occupied with me alone. He cares for the whole world as He would for one individual. Consider, my dear brethren, how, when you look at a well-painted

[1] Scit enim Pater vester, quia his omnibus indigetis.—Matth. vi. 32.
[2] Scit Pater vester. [3] Omnia nuda et aperta sunt oculis ejus.—Heb. iv. 13.

portrait, no matter where you turn, the eyes always follow you; it is a figure, though an imperfect one, of the divine wisdom and providence. Go where you will, do as you please, let what may happen to you, whether you are in joy or in sorrow, the eye of God always follows you, in all places, in all circumstances. His wisdom "reacheth from end to end."[1] It knows and comprehends all things, not merely those that are present, but also those that are past, and what will happen and can happen for all eternity; everything is clear and manifest to the eye of God, and is arranged by His providence with the utmost wisdom. Away with those foolish theorists, of whom there are some, even amongst Catholics, who, through want of a lively faith, and for some absurd reason of their own, imagine that God is blind and does not trouble Himself about the affairs of the world! As if everything happened by chance, according to the false words of one of Job's friends: "And thou sayest: What doth God know? and He judgest as it were through a mist. The clouds are His covert and He doth not consider our things, and He walketh about the poles of Heaven."[2] Heaven is His palace, and He remains there always, without ever coming forth from it; there He enjoys Himself, without being in the least concerned about His creatures. Certainly He would have a great deal to do, if He were always busied with the concerns of mortals. Such are the blasphemous thoughts and speeches of those half atheists. Oh, poor mortals, how miserable you would be, if they were true! What consolation would there be for you in your trials, if you had to deal with a God who cares nothing for you? But, be comforted; the true God sees all your wants, says the Prophet Jeremias: "Whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the children of Adam;"[3] He knows more of your wants than you do yourselves.

He takes constant care of us, and adverts even to the least thing.

The same all-wise God is more careful of you than you can be or can ever wish to be for yourselves. When you are asleep at night, the eye of God is watching over you for your greater good. Sometimes, when you sit down quietly, not suspecting any evil, the hand of God is engaged in averting some misfortune that was about to happen to you, of which you knew nothing. Instead of giving me merely a piece of bread to eat, He causes, without my knowing anything of it, a whole crop of corn to grow for my support. The little grain of wheat that lies in a barn ten miles

[1] Attingit a fine usque ad finem.—Sap. viii. 1.

[2] Dicis: Quid enim novit Deus? et quasi per caliginem judicat. Nubes latibulum ejus, nec nostra considerat, et circa cardines cœli perambulat.—Job xxii. 13, 14.

[3] Cujus oculi aperti sunt super omnes vias filiorum Adami.—Jerem. xxxii. 19.

off, has been appointed by God from all eternity to be eaten by you or by some other individual in particular. The branch blown down by the wind and lying in the forest, still awaits the arrival of him who is specially appointed by divine providence to make fire of it. The wool of one particular sheep in a whole flock is destined to make clothing for a certain individual, who never even bestows a thought on it. The piece of meat that is now cooking in the pot, is already set aside by providence for some poor prisoner or beggar, to whom it will be given, out of Christian charity, although he knows nothing of it yet. Do you know how many hairs you have on your head? Oh, you say, how could I know that? Yet God knows it, and has counted them exactly, as Christ says: "The hairs of your head are all numbered."[1] How many hairs fall from your head that you know nothing of, and they are cast into the fire or swept out of the house, because they are of no value, and yet the great God takes care of them! "But a hair of your head shall not perish,"[2] without His knowledge. Not a flake of snow is blown about by the wind, that God does not know of it, nay, He has even decreed that a particular flake should fall upon you, and not on any one else. No leaf falls from a tree without having its place marked out for it by Him. Not a weed grows in the garden that has not its height, shape, and form, and the length of time it is to grow, determined by God. In a word, even the meanest thing on earth is under the constant care of divine providence. The conclusion to be drawn is evident, my dear brethren. If God knows and cares for even the least thing, that to our mind is of no importance whatever, how much more careful will He not be of His reasoning creatures, whom He has made to know, love, and possess Him for all eternity? How much less likely is He to leave them without what is necessary for the support of their bodies, the comfort of their minds, and for the eternal salvation of their immortal souls? And what a consolation it is for me, and for all men, to think and say with the Prophet David: "But I am a beggar and poor; the Lord is careful for me."[3] I am a poor, miserable mortal, beset with many evils and dangers of soul and body, yet I do not despair; the Lord knows it all; the Lord is my Guardian and is careful for me.[4] He knows and cares for

[1] Vestri capilli capitis omnes numerati sunt.—Matth. x. 30.
[2] Capillus de capite vestro non peribit.—Luke xxi. 18.
[3] Ego mendicus sum et pauper, Dominus sollicitus est mei.—Ps. xxxix. 18.
[4] Dominus sollicitus est mei.

everything that belongs to me. Certainly, that is reason enough to abandon myself to Him with childlike confidence.

His almighty power can do everything.

My Father, who knows everything,[1] is able also to arrange everything for my greater good. This is another and still more powerful reason. I do not think there ever was any one who doubted that. He who believes in the one true God, must adore Him as the Almighty Lord, whom nothing can withstand, to whose will all things must be subject. So does the Prophet Jeremias address Him: "O most mighty, great, and powerful, the Lord of hosts is Thy name."[2] As long as I am under His care and protection, who can harm me, or what can be wanting to me? For He who made this earth out of nothing by a single word, can He not provide a dwelling for me in some corner of it? He who placed bounds to the raging sea that it dare not pass, He who restrains the winds and makes them blow, how, when, and where He wills, can He not protect me against the enemies of my soul and body? He who causes the mighty oak to grow from a small acorn, can He not find the means of providing for me in my poverty? He who taught fire how to ascend on high, can He not give me counsel and advice in my doubts and perplexities? He who protected the three youths in the fiery furnace, Jonas in the whale's belly, and Daniel in the lions' den, can He not save my life from dangers that are not near so great? He who fed thousands in the desert with a few loaves, can He not find bread enough for me, and for you and your children? He who has so richly adorned the earth, that is only our footstool, can He not provide me with clothing? Certainly, O Lord, Thou canst do all that easily! I confess with the angel Gabriel: "No word shall be impossible with God."[3] Therefore, I think and say, with fresh courage and firm confidence in Thy providence, what Thy Prophet suggests to me: "The Lord is the protector of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?"[4]

He has also a sincere desire to arrange all for our good, because He is our Father.

But, you say, my dear brethren: We know all that well enough. God knows and can do all things; He knows how to help us, nor does He want the power to do so; but there is something else. And what is that? He does not wish to do so, as we often find to be the case, when He leaves us in trials and troubles without consolation and help. But, Christians, where is your confidence? Where is your faith? Does not God mean

[1] Scit Pater vester.

[2] Fortissime, magne et potens, Domine exercituum nomen tibi.—Jerem. xxxii. 18.

[3] Non erit impossibile apud Deum omne verbum.—Luke i. 37.

[4] Dominus protector vitæ meæ, a quo trepidabo?—Ps. xxvi. 1.

well towards you? He who knows your wants, is your Father. "Christ did not say," is the beautiful explanation that St. John Chrysostom gives of these words: "Christ did not say, God knoweth, but, your Father knoweth, so as to encourage men to have greater confidence. For, if He is a Father, He cannot disregard His children. For, what father would allow his children to be in want even of necessaries."[1] if he is able to provide them? It would be a cruel father, indeed, who would, even if he had only one loaf left, coolly look on when his son is suffering from hunger! And, even if there were such fathers among men, yet God could never be so hard-hearted. Tertullian says: "There is no one so good and so fatherly,"[2] no one who is more concerned for the wants and necessities of his children, no one who has a greater love for his own flesh and blood than God has for us, for whom He has sacrificed His only Son. Nay, the name, father, is not sufficient to express the tenderness of His love for us; He takes the name of mother also. Hear what He says by the Prophet Isaias: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee."[3] Hast thou not had experience of this, oh, David? He answers: "My father and my mother have left me; but the Lord hath taken me up."[4] Hast thou not also experienced it, oh, Ishmael, when thy mother Agar left thee under the tree in the wilderness? When thou wast on the point of dying of thirst, God heard thy cries, and sent an angel to show thee a spring of water and to bring thee back to thy mother. And thou, too, Moses, hast experienced it. Thy mother had given thee up to death through human respect, when she exposed thee on the Nile, in a basket, but thy heavenly Father remembered thee; He was the pilot who brought thy frail bark to a safe harbor, and intrusted thee to the care of a king's daughter. So great is the fatherly, nay, more than motherly care that the God of love takes of His children! Is it likely, my dear brethren, that this God has changed His heart towards us? Are we not rather His chosen children, whom He has specially commanded to call Him Father? Christ

[1] Non dixit: scit Deus, sed scit Pater vester, ut eos in majorem spem ducat. Si enim Pater est, non poterit despicere filios. Qualis enim est pater, qui sustinet etiam necessaria filiis deese?

[2] Tam pius nemo, tam pater nemo.

[3] Numquid oblivisci potest mulier infantem suum, ut non misereatur filio uteri sui? et si illa oblita fuerit, eog tamen non obliviscar tui.—Isai. xlix. 15.

[4] Pater meus et mater mea derelinquerunt me; Dominus autem assumpsit me.—Ps. xxvi. 10

says in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "Thus, therefore, shall you pray: Our Father;"[1] so that we must make known our cares to Him with childlike confidence, just as children do to their parents.

Therefore, like children, we must place all our confidence in Him.

Consider what occurs in a large family. A crowd of little children are always running after their father and mother; they eat and drink a great many times a day; they never trouble themselves as to where the food comes from; they care not whether bread is cheap, or dear; they leave all that to their parents, who have to provide for them. Nor do the parents expect their children to trouble themselves about it, and if one of the little ones were to say to his father that he was anxious about it, the father would at once tell him it was not his business, that he had only to be good, obedient, and diligent in his studies, and everything would be provided for him. And that is what God, too, requires from His children; it is on that account He tells us to call Him Father. Our chief care should be to lead a good and Christian life; to obey His law exactly; to use moderate, natural diligence according to our state, in temporal things; to have recourse to Him always, and then to allow Him to do with and for us as He pleases, with the firm assurance that nothing will be wanting to us. Oh, what a quiet and happy life we could have, if we were not wanting in that childlike confidence! Hear how God Himself complains, that we trust in Him so little. Look up, He says, and see all the birds that fly about in the air: "Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns," and yet, "your heavenly Father feedeth them."[2] As if He wished to say: Would it not be folly and cruelty for a father to feed cats, and dogs, and horses abundantly every day, with his own hands, in order to give pleasure to his son, and yet to deny his son the food that he gives to animals on his son's account? See how unjustly you accuse my heavenly Father, oh, ye of little faith, with your childish fear and inordinate anxiety on account of your wants! He feeds with His own hand the birds of the air, the young ravens and carrion birds even, for your use and benefit. "Are not you of much more value than they?"[3] Do you think, then, are you afraid that such a Father will leave you in the lurch? Was it not looked upon as an act of cruelty,

[1] Sic ergo vos orabitis: Pater noster.—Matth. vi. 9.

[2] Respicite volatilia cœli: quoniam non serunt, neque metunt, neque congregant in horrea, et Pater vester cœlestis pascit illa.—Ibid. 26.

[3] Nonne vos magis pluris estis illis?—Ibid.

on the part of that Athenian senator, to drive away the sparrow that sought refuge with him when pursued by a hawk? On account of that very act he was justly expelled from the society of the other senators, because he had dishonored his position by such an act of cruelty. What would they have done, if he had turned away, not a sparrow, but a human being who had thus fled to him for refuge? What, if he had acted thus to his own child? How cruel, then, we consider our heavenly Father to be, when we have such little confidence in Him, as if He were likely to drive away His own poor creatures, whom He has adopted as His own dear children, when they fly to Him for refuge in their necessities, as to the source of all good! No, be not anxious; no matter who you are, no matter what danger threatens, what enemy persecutes, what want oppresses you, abandon yourself to God, as children do to their loving father; throw yourself in His arms; He will not turn away from nor abandon you, nor leave you without comfort in your distress, for He is your Father.

He has also promised to provide for those who trust in Him.

If the name of father, which takes away all fear and anxiety from children, is not enough to inspire you with confidence in God, then, at least, you must believe His own words, for He is a God of truth, whom as Christians you are bound to believe. No one can bind himself more solemnly to do or to give anything, than God has bound Himself to help in all dangers those who hope in Him, and to give them what they desire. We find hundreds of such promises in the Holy Scripture, and they are repeated so impressively, that he who doubts them must necessarily accuse a most faithful God of treachery. To save time, I will quote only a few of them. The Wise Ecclesiasticus says: "Ye that fear the Lord, hope in Him, and mercy shall come to you for your delight. Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded."[1] If there be any such let him come forward: "For who hath continued in His commandment, and hath been forsaken? or who hath called upon Him, and He despised him?"[2] No such person can be found in the whole world: "For God is compassionate and merciful . . . and He is a protector to all that seek Him in truth."[3] He says by the Prophet David:

[1] Qui timetis Dominum, sperate in illum, et in oblectationem veniet vobis misericordia. Scitote, quia nullus speravit in Domino, et confusus est.—Eccl. ii. 9, 11.

[2] Quis enim permansit in mandatis ejus, et derelictus? est aut quis invocavit eum, et despexit illum?—Ibid. 12.

[3] Quoniam pius et misericors est Deus, . . . et protector est omnibus exquirentibus se in veritate.—Ibid. 13.

"Behold, the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear Him, and on them that hope in His mercy to deliver their souls from death, and feed them in famine."[1] "Be not solicitous, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things."[2] In a word, God commands the Prophet Isaias: "Say to the just man that it is well."[3] Go, ye preachers, and tell all good men that they must be full of hope; all things will go well with them, and turn out for their greater good. But, O Lord, must I say that to all? Yes, to all the just, without exception. To all the just? Must I then go to that poor man who is unjustly oppressed by others, and who finds nothing but misery and wretchedness wherever he turns? Certainly, I send you to him first of all; tell him he must have confidence in Me, and I will not forsake him. Must I go to that widow, who has no help or comfort left? I will find her bathed in tears, and surrounded by a crowd of children who often cry to her in vain for bread? By all means you must go to her and tell her to hope in Me, and all shall be well with her. And to that poor woman who is ill in bed, and can do nothing for her support? Yes, go and say to her that He who feeds the sparrows will not allow her to die of hunger, if she trusts in Him. Shall I say it also to those poor orphans, who have been deprived of father and mother by death, and who have hardly any one to look to for help, so that the dying parents were forced to exclaim: Alas, what will become of my poor children; how will they ever get through the world? Yes, go and tell them that it is well;[4] they must look on Me as their Father and Guardian; if all men forsake them, I will still keep my protecting hand over them. Therefore, my dear brethren, I say to all of you, by command of God, the same words: "Say to the just man that it is well." Is there one amongst you whose business is not prospering, who is reduced to want, who knows not what to do to support himself and his family, or who is in dread of extreme misery, let him be of good heart! Let him only trust in God, and submit to His decrees with full resignation, and everything will go well with him, everything will turn out to his advantage. Do not doubt of this; your Heavenly Fa-

[1] Ecce, oculi Domini super metuentes eum, et in eis, qui sperant super misericordia ejus ut eruat a morte animas eorum, et alat eos in fame.—Ps. xxxii. 18, 19.

[2] Nolite solliciti esse, dicentes: Quid manducabimus, aut quid bibemus, aut quo operiemur? Scit enim Pater vester, quia his omnibus indigetis.—Matth. vi. 31, 32.

[3] Dicite justo, quoniam bene.—Isai. iii. 10.

[4] Quoniam bene.

ther cares for you ; He has given you His word, and promised to help you, if you serve Him truly and trust in Him. He will infallibly keep His word, for His promises cannot deceive.

How unreasonable they are who do not trust in God.

Ah, Christians, how is it that we are so wanting in confidence in God? We believe that there is one God, in whom there are three Persons; that Jesus Christ, God and man, is present under the appearances of bread and wine; and many other mysteries, too, that far surpass our understanding, we believe as firmly as if we saw them with our own eyes. Why? Because God has revealed them ; that alone is enough for us, for we are certain that God cannot deceive us. But it is the same God who assures us that, of His own accord, He keeps a watchful eye on all our wants, so as to provide for us ; that every one who hopes in Him, will not be confounded; that there is no danger or necessity, in which He is not willing to help those who have recourse to Him with confidence in His goodness. Now, this is not less worthy of belief than the mystery of the Blessed Trinity ; God can no more deceive us in this point than in the others; why, then, should we not believe it firmly? We trust even an honorable man, who pledges his word and makes us a promise ; why should we not trust God, who cannot go back of His word like men ; who can always fulfil it, which men are often unable to do ; who would not be God if He deceived us and did not keep His promise? Why, I ask again, do we not trust Him? Why have we so little confidence in Him?

And put their confidence in creatures.

But alas, O Lord, Thou mayst remind us as often as Thou wilt, that Thou art our Provider and that Thou dost not care less for us than for the birds of the air, that Thou supportest even in the cold winter ; Thou mayst assure us that Thou art our Father, and we are Thy dear children, that not a hair of our heads can perish against Thy will ; Thou mayst declare, upon oath, that a prodigy would happen before Thou wouldst deceive us in our hopes and abandon us in our wants ; but all Thy assurances can give us no comfort in the least danger, nor induce us to throw ourselves into Thy arms and place our hope in Thee alone. We are just as uneasy as ever, just as fearful at the approach of the least misfortune. That man is just as downcast as ever at his poverty, or on account of having lost his law-suit ; that mother still trembles with fear for her only son, and dreads every moment that she will hear bad news of him ; those children weep and lament at the bedside of their sick father, fearing that, if he dies, they will not be able to support themselves.

The least breath of wind terrifies him who is on the sea, the least cloud fills the husbandman with alarm; no one thinks of Thee, oh, heavenly Father! Instead of flying to Thee for refuge, we place all our trust in frail and mortal creatures. The clever trust to their own wits in danger, the rich confide in the wealth they have amassed with so much labor, as if they could enjoy it forever; some who have law-suits on hand trust in their friends and patrons; others who have large families confide in their own labor and industry; most people rely on medicines alone in sickness; every one has recourse in necessity to selfish, inconstant, and deceitful mortals, who, as a general rule, either cannot or will not help them, and whom they have as much reason to mistrust as they have to place all their confidence in Thee, oh, good God!

Who even abandon God, through fear that He would not help them in temporal things.

And what is worst of all, we violate Thy commands for fear that if we served Thee faithfully we should suffer some temporal loss. How many use unjust means, how many have recourse to underhand trickery to maintain themselves in their state, as if we were obliged to be at a loss by always doing what is right! How many use sinful means to gain even a just law-suit, as if God could not gain it for them, or replace their loss otherwise if they are unsuccessful! How many a maiden sacrifices her purity to gain a livelihood, as if God could not provide for her, if she remained true to Him! How many shrink from fulfilling the law of Christian charity and mercy and giving generous alms, lest their children should be at a loss thereby: as if God could not provide for them, although He has promised that, "he that giveth to the poor shall not want"![1] How many a one is afraid to hear Mass in the morning, lest he should not have time enough to work, and thus lose some of his daily earnings; as if all temporal blessings had not to come to us from the divine generosity!

And therefore they are abandoned by God.

And this, if you wish to know it, oh, Christians of little faith, is the reason why God, wearied of His own goodness to you, sometimes leaves you without help in your wants, sickness, misfortunes, persecutions, or poverty, and allows you to moan and lament in vain, while He pretends not to hear you, either because you are not as pious and zealous in His service as you should be, or because you have not a childlike confidence in Him, and place your hopes in creatures alone. For that very reason, I say, you get neither help nor consolation from Him, and there-

[1] Qui dat pauperi, non indigebit.—Prov. xxviii. 27.

fore things do not prosper with you, because He wishes to show you that without Him, all your labor and trouble are worthless; and besides, divine providence is not so much concerned about the wicked. Such is the threat of the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "Woe to them that are faint-hearted, who believe not God; and therefore they shall not be protected by Him. Woe to them that have lost patience, and that have forsaken the right ways, and have gone aside into crooked ways."[1] God acts with us in such circumstances as He did with King Ochozias; the latter being grievously ill, sent to the false god Beelzebub for help and advice, as we read in the 1st chapter of the Fourth Book of Kings. The true God was so displeased at this that He commanded the Prophet Elias to say to the King: "Is there not a God in Israel, that ye go to consult Beelzebub, the god of Accaron? Wherefore thus saith the Lord: From the bed on which thou art gone up, thou shalt not come down, but thou shalt surely die."[2] The same punishment is inflicted nowadays on those who do not put their confidence in God when they are in trouble and difficulty, but seek comfort and consolation from creatures. Miserable wretches that you are, "is there not a God in Israel?"[3] Is there no God in Heaven to whom you can fly for refuge? "Wherefore, thus saith the Lord: Thou shalt not come down from thy bed."[4] As a just punishment of your want of confidence, all help will be denied you; your business will not prosper, you will not escape that danger, no matter what you do, you will not recover from that sickness; and that because you do not place your hopes in God, but elsewhere.

Conclusion and confident resignation to the care and decree of God.

But, my dear brethren, we shall manage matters more prudently, we shall confidently commit ourselves and all our affairs to Him who alone knows how to help us, who alone can and will help us, as St. Peter warns us: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you."[5] Oh, what a consolation, what a happiness for a soul that loves God, that trusts in Him, and looks upon Him as its own Foster-Father! What a consolation for him who can think and say to himself: I am certain that

[1] Vae dissolutis corde, qui non credunt Deo; et ideo non protegentur ab eo. Vae his, qui perdiderunt sustinentiam, et qui dereliquerunt vias rectas, et diverterunt in vias pravas.—Eccl. ii. 15, 16.

[2] Numquid non est Deus in Israel, ut eatis ad consulendum Beelzebub, deum Accaron? Quam ob rem hæc dicit Dominus: De lectulo super quem ascendisti, non descendes, sed morte morieris.—IV. Kings i. 3, 4.

[3] Numquid non est Deus in Israel?

[4] Quam ob rem hæc dicit Dominus: De lectulo non descendes etc.

[5] Omnem sollicitudinem vestram projicientes in eum, quoniam ipsi cura est de vobis.—I. Pet. v. 7.

God knows what I want and what is good for me; I am certain that He can arrange everything for my greater good; I am certain, too, that He loves me more than a father loves his only child, and that He will arrange everything for my greater good! What need have I then to trouble myself? What can disturb my peace? No matter how things go with me, well or ill, in the judgment of the world, I know that my loving Father has so decreed for me, and, therefore, I am certain that it is all for the best. What a happiness to be thus able to live in constant peace and contentment, without fear or anxiety, like a child in its mother's lap! Oh, certainly, it is a foretaste of the happiness that awaits such souls in Heaven! Ah, why have I not long since abandoned myself with that confidence into the hands of my heavenly Father? If I had done so, I should have escaped much unnecessary care, disquiet, fear, anxiety, trouble, and despair, which served only to increase my misery. Away, then, with those useless cares! To Thee and to Thy providence, oh, heavenly Father, I commit my soul, my body, and all that I have from Thee. Thou mayest do with me according to Thy good will and pleasure! Let others place their trust in men and in other creatures, that are all only broken reeds; I shall build on a foundation that can never give way. I shall be better cared for, as long as I trust in Thee, although I may have nothing, than if the whole world belonged to me otherwise. I will say with the Prophet Micheas: "But I will look towards the Lord, I will wait for God my Saviour: my God will hear me."[1] Yes, He will hear me, although I remain silent; my wants will speak for me, for they are all known to Him; His own infinite power will speak for me, for it can help me; His fatherly heart will speak for me, for it loves me; His own word will speak for me, for He has promised to help me if I trust in Him. Confiding in Him, I cannot be disturbed by any misfortune, danger, illness, or want. If temptations try to lead me into sin, "I will look towards the Lord."[2] If poverty and want oppress me, "I will look towards the Lord." If I am tried by sickness, "I will look towards the Lord." Whatever may be my circumstances: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be put to confusion."[3] Let that be our conclusion, my dear brethren. Amen.

[1] Ego autem ad Dominum adspiciam, exspectabo Deum salvatorem meum: audiet me Deus meus.—Mich. vii. 7.

[2] Ego autem ad Dominus adspiciam.

[3] in te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in æternum.—Ps. lxx. 1.

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord:

Text.

Veniunt ad monumentum.—Mark xvi. 2.
"They come to the sepulchre."

Who are they who go out so early in the morning? Mary Magdalen, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, all weak women. Where are they going to? "To the sepulchre,"[1] in which Christ was buried, whose very Name was hated by the Jews, whom even courageous men, nay, even His own Apostles and disciples were afraid to defend, lest they should be seized by the Jews and put to death. What were the circumstances under which they went? They knew that there was a guard before the sepulchre to prevent any one from entering. Why were they going? "That coming they might anoint Jesus."[2] But how could they do that, because they could not drive away the guard, nor roll back the heavy stone that closed the entrance of the sepulchre? And they were well aware of that also: "Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? For it was very great."[3] Considering all these things, might not their journey seem a fruitless one? And yet they went on with courage and confidence, knowing that He who, though dead, was the Almighty God, could remove all difficulties from their way, so that they might fulfil their intention. Nor were they disappointed, for when they came to the grave, all the soldiers were gone: "They saw the stone rolled back,"[4] and what was still farther beyond their hopes, they were the first to hear of the Resurrection of Christ. See; what no man dared to do, was done by those weak women, who, in spite of the difficulties that surrounded them, put their confidence in God, and went on boldly. How their example puts to shame our want of courage, my dear brethren, etc.—*continues as before.*

[1] Ad monumentum. [2] Ut venientes ungerent Jesum.—Mark xvi. 1.
[3] Dicebant ad invicem: quis revolvet nobis lapidem ab ostio monumenti? Erat quippe magnus valde.—Ibid. 3, 4.
[4] Viderunt revolutum lapidem.—Ibid. 4.

ON THE GOOD USE THAT EACH ONE IN HIS STATE OF LIFE SHOULD MAKE OF TIME.

SEVENTIETH SERMON.

ON THE REDEEMING IN OLD AGE OF LOST TIME.

Subject.

1st. Old people should learn on this, the last day of the year, to redeem and make up for lost time. 2d. How they may do this.—*Preached on the Sunday in the Octave of Christmas, which was the last day of the year.*

Text.

Hæc processerat in diebus multis.—Luke ii. 36.
"She was far advanced in years."

Introduction.

There was once a remarkable assembly of people of different ages in the Temple of Jerusalem. There was Anna, a widow eighty-four years old, who always served God zealously day and night by fasting and prayer. There was Mary, the Virgin Mother, who was only in her fifteenth year, but had already far surpassed all the Saints in virtue and holiness. There was Jesus Christ, still a little Infant a few weeks old, but the Holy of holies. Sanctity, therefore, does not depend on one's time of life, or whether one is young or old, but on the use that one makes of his life. This Gospel, my dear brethren, is admirably suited for this, the last day of the year. To-day all are accustomed to think how old they are; children think: now I am about to enter on my seventh, eighth, ninth, or tenth year; young people think: now I shall be twenty or twenty-five years old; old people say: the six-

tieth, seventieth, or eightieth year of my life will soon have passed away; so that the end of the year reminds every one of how long he has lived. But does it also remind every one of how he has spent the time of his life? And yet, that is the principal thought we should have to-day, partly that we may redeem the time that we have lost and misspent, partly that we may make a better use of our time in future. The first point is especially for the old, the second for the young. The former should profit by the warning of St. Paul, "redeeming the time,"[1] the latter by that of the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "Son, observe the time,"[2] which you have still to live. The consideration of this last day of the year should teach us both these points. But since that would be too much matter for one sermon, I shall divide it into two, giving the first place to the old people, as is right. On to-day, therefore, I will speak specially for the old, since it is the last day of the year. On next Sunday, the first of the New Year, the young shall hear of something to their advantage.

Plan of Discourse.

Old people should learn on this, the last day of the year, to redeem and make up for lost time. The first part. How they may do this, they may learn in the second part of this discourse, which will be partly a meditation and partly an instruction.

Oh, Holy Ghost, if Thou dost not rule my tongue and strengthen my heart and those of my hearers to make a good and practical conclusion, I shall lose my time in useless talking! We all beg of Thee, therefore, to give us Thy light and grace, through the merits of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

Seneca in his villa finds out that he is growing old.

Here I can be helped out with my subject by what the philosopher Seneca wrote once, when he was growing old, to his friend Lucilius: "I came to my villa,"[3] he says, looked all around to see how things were going on, and then began to find fault with my steward. How is it, I said, that every time I come here, I find something that wants repairing; either a roof is giving way, or a wall, or a piece of timber in a roof? But, sir, answered the steward, you must not blame me for that; the building is too old, and I am afraid that one of these days it will fall on top of me. What, thought I to myself, so old as that? And yet I had it built. What will become of me?[4] The beams

[1] Redimentes tempus.—Ephes v. 16. [2] Fili, conserva tempus.—Eccl. iv. 23.
[3] Veneram in suburbanum meum. [4] Quid mihi futurum est?

of wood are beginning to rot, the stones to crumble away and fall down, and they are younger than I; what will become of me, who am made of flesh and blood, and not of wood and stone? With the thought in my mind I went out to examine the garden, and found many of the trees in a state that highly displeased me. How is this? I said to the gardener. I see clearly that you are not attending to your business. Look at the state those trees are in, with their rotten and crooked branches; there is hardly a green branch on them. Sir, answered the gardener, I assure you I do all I can for them, but to no purpose; the trees are too old, and have no sap. O ho, thought I to myself again, I planted these trees myself, and saw their first leaves. If they are now so old, what must their owner be, who has planted them? I must certainly be a good deal older than I thought. My dear Lucilius,—such is the conclusion of his letter:—"I owe it to my villa that I became aware of how old I am,"[1] and how near death.

We can say the same if we consider ourselves.

My dear brethren, is it not so with us mortals? We are growing older every day, and do not bestow a thought on it. Not without reason does the Holy Scripture compare our lives to a ship sailing swiftly onward, that leaves behind her no vestige of her course. If we stand or sit still, our lives still hurry on; if we sleep during the night, our lives do not sleep, they are always in motion. We eat, drink, and enjoy ourselves, we occupy ourselves in different ways at home and abroad, and still our lives do not stop for a single moment, but continue their onward course. Every hour we have less to live, and so days, and weeks, and months, and years succeed each other, but we never think of the flight of time; we grow old and fall into the grave, almost before we know where we are. Christians, you who have spent many years in this world, have already experienced many changes and vicissitudes; you could speak of many things that you have seen, heard, and read in your time, but do you know, can you fairly realize yet to yourselves, that you are now old and must soon descend into the grave? Consider the state of your bodies, and see whether you will not find in them signs of ruin and decay. Your eyes are not so bright as they were, your ears are not so sharp, your limbs do not carry you so swiftly, your teeth are gone or are decaying, the leaves are falling from the tree, that is to say, the hairs are falling from your heads. And what is the cause of that? Old age; you have lived a long time already, and death is near.

[1] Debeo suburbano meo, quod mihi senectutus mea apparuit.—Senec. Ep. 12. lib. 2.

This day should remind us of that.

And if nothing else reminds you of it, at least this day should teach you. Think of it a moment: this is already the thirtieth anniversary in this century, of the last day of the year. How many such days have I seen? It seems to be hardly a year since I left school, but if I count up, I shall find that twenty or thirty years, or even more have elapsed since then. It seems to be only a few months since I got married, since I first came into the house I now occupy, since I first entered on my present occupation, and yet, how many years have passed since then! How time flies! How often have my companions, neighbors, friends, and relations wished me a happy New Year, and many of them are now dead! How often have I wished the same to others, who are now twenty, thirty, or forty years in their graves! Oh, I begin to see that I have lived a long time; I am an old man, now; the best part of my life is gone, and only a very small portion of it is left for me; I must soon die. Such is the fruit that each one should derive from the consideration of this day.

How that is to be done for the good of our souls.

But we must not be satisfied with the mere thought and remembrance of this fact; we must for the good of our souls go a little farther. For instance, we might think: beautiful years, whither have you gone? What has become of all the months, weeks, days, hours, and minutes of the past years? How have I employed them? I should not have used a single moment for any purpose but for the end of my creation, that is, for the salvation of my soul, for the honor, praise, and service of my God. Alas, has a single year passed since I came to the use of reason, that I have not wandered away from this end? Have I ever spent a single month without offending God? Can I with truth point to a single day of my life, and say: That day was devoted fully, without the exception of one moment, to the service of God? Yet, every minute of all that time, that I have not spent in the service of God and the business of my soul, is lost to me forever! Oh, what a loss! How much good I have left undone, that I might have accomplished! How many means and opportunities of working out my salvation I have neglected! How much merit I have lost, that I might have gained for Heaven! How many inspirations and graces of God, that I could have used to do good, I have disregarded! How much precious time I have spent in sleeping, dressing, eating, drinking, talking, amusing myself, paying visits, and idling about, without ever offering my actions to God! How much time I have lost in idleness and sin! What will be the end of all that? Perhaps the next year, this

very day may be the last of my life. I am very old now ; my body shows signs of decay. How would it be if I were to drop down dead now ; what have I to bring with me into eternity ? What have I to live on there ? Ah, how can I replace the lost time, and redeem it? It is high time for me now to begin to serve God alone, and to begin at once, and in earnest, since to all appearance I have so little time left. That is the way, my dear brethren, in which we should remember and think of what the last day of the year teaches us.

Many wilfully reject such thoughts.

But how few there are who trouble themselves with such thoughts ! Ausonius tells us of the Grecian courtesan Thais, that the older she became, the less frequently she looked in the glass, so that she might not notice how old she was growing. Once as she was standing before the glass, she noticed that her forehead was wrinkled, whereupon she became so enraged that she threw the glass on the ground and would not look at it again. Foolish woman, how could it help showing your wrinkles ? Were they likely to become less visible because you did not see them yourself ? If you had been wise you would have used the mirror oftener, in your old age, than at any other time, so as to see how the beauty with which you ensnared so many souls, was fading away, and then you might have spent the rest of your life in doing penance. I am afraid that many Christians are guilty of the same folly, that there are many who do not look in the glass, nor notice the flight of time, nor try to redeem the past, but wilfully drive away all salutary thoughts of that nature, because they do not wish to remember that they are growing old, and that death will soon come to them.

But we should often think of them, so as to redeem the past.

And what is the good of all that ? It will not delay the arrival of death, nor keep them a moment longer out of eternity. If there ever was a time to have such thoughts, it is surely now, so that the loss of the past may be made good. The Spartan of whom Plutarch writes was much more sensible in this respect. In ancient Sparta the people were all warriors, who despised worldly pomp ; the men shaved their heads, the women alone allowed their hair to grow. One old man, however, as soon as he noticed the approach of old age, allowed his beard, which was white as snow, to grow to its full length. The others were amazed and asked him why he thus acted against the usual custom. He answered: "I do it that, seeing my gray hairs, I may not act unworthily of them."[1] A wise and prudent answer !

[1] Id facio, ut canos meos videns nihil eis indecorum faciam.

Christians: "Walk with wisdom," is the warning of St. Paul, "redeeming the time."[1] Think, and think often, of your past years, so that if you have lost any of them, you may make the loss good again. You may, perhaps, find that you have lived in darkness,[2] that you have misspent much time. Keep your old age constantly before your eyes, that you may not do anything unbecoming. It is time, now, for you to commence to walk as the children of light;[3] redeem the ill-spent past at once,[4] and replace the time you have lost. But how are you to do that? How can you make up for lost time? You shall hear in the

Second Part.

How to redeem the past. Shown from the holy Fathers.

And that is not a question to be wondered at: How can we redeem the past? Can we bring back the years of our childhood and youth, and live them over again? No, that is impossible; not an hour or a moment that is past can be recalled. God can give me as many years to live as I have lived already, but, although He is Omnipotent, He cannot make it untrue to say that the years of the past are gone forever, and what is lost of them is lost forever. And what dost thou mean, then, oh, holy Apostle, with thy exhortation to redeem the time? The holy Fathers give us an answer to this question in different words, but to the same purpose. To redeem the time, says St. Anselm, is to repent sincerely of past sins, and to be converted with all one's heart to God, for the sinner deserves that God should take all time away from him, and shorten his life, as the Lord says by Solomon: "The years of the wicked shall be shortened,"[5] he will not be allowed to live as long as he otherwise might have lived; so that when man appeases God by repentance, he receives the full time appointed for him, and thus he redeems the time he would have lost otherwise. Again, you can redeem the time, says St. Augustine, if you devote solely to the service of God and the good of your soul, the days and hours that you intended to give to idleness or worldly and unnecessary occupations, after you have spent many days and hours in idleness and amusement.

Explained by a simile.

That is the way in which the head of a family acts, who finds that he is not as well off as he ought to be, when he examines his accounts at the end of the year. He has made more debts

[1] In sapientia ambulate, tempus redimentes.—Coloss. iv. 5.
[2] Eratis enim aliquando tenebræ. [3] Ut filii lucis ambulate.
[4] Tempus redimentes. [5] Anni impiorum breviabuntur.—Prov. x. 27.

than profit, and he is not able to pay them. What is he to do? I cannot allow that to go on, he thinks; if I do we shall all be reduced to beggary. And what does he do? He considers how he and his family have been living hitherto, so that he may cut off whatever is superfluous and so avoid all unnecessary expense. Hitherto, he says, I have kept three maid-servants, and one man-servant; one maid was for the children, another for my wife, and the third for the kitchen, while the man had to attend to me: now the man and two of the maids are not necessary, so they can go. My wife can look after herself and the children, I must wait on myself, and thus I can save enough to pay the interest of my debts. Hitherto, almost every quarter, as often as a new fashion came out, we have had new clothes, but we have to let the fashions alone now; our old clothes are good enough for us: the children need not be dressed so expensively, our means do not allow of it; all superfluities must be done away with, so as to save money; people know who we are well enough. Hitherto we have had five or six different dishes at table, and have often invited people, but what is the good of that now? We can do without the half of our daily food and the third part of the entertainments we used to give, and all that expense will be saved. Hitherto we have enjoyed all possible comforts; we have slept in the morning till seven or eight o'clock; I have spent whole days in idleness, and my wife has lost much time in useless visiting and in giving dinner-parties. A life like that is not profitable; we must get up earlier in future, and be more diligent. The food will not come into our mouths of its own accord. All the money that used to be spent on tea, sugar, and other delicacies, must be saved. In that way the master of the house will make but a little profit every day, yet it will amount to something considerable in the end, and in a few years he will not only make good his losses, but become even richer than before. My dear brethren, we are all like stewards of the Almighty God in this world, as Christ explains in several parables. The business we have to do concerns eternal goods that we can every day gain and store up for ourselves in Heaven, so that we may have something to live on for all eternity. Oh, God of goodness, what a beautiful time Thou hast given us in all the years that are past! What great profit we might have derived from it! Every moment, if we wished, and had labored with that intention, we might have gained the Kingdom of Heaven! Now let each one call himself to account, and see whether he has become richer or poorer, and

to what extent, as far as his soul is concerned, and whether he has lost or gained during all that time. Many, perhaps, when they consider everything carefully, will find that they have contracted more debts, that are still owing to the divine justice, than they have made profit by their tepid and carelessly-performed good works. What are they to do? Are they to be reduced to beggary in the end? Quick, there is no time for delay; your stewardship may soon be at an end, it must end soon for the old! You must carry on your business on another footing; you must arrange matters so as to make good your losses.

We must employ in the service of God the time we have hitherto spent otherwise.

How? Just as that prudent master acted. The superfluous and unnecessary occupations that used to take up so much time, must be cut off, and the time thus spared must be spent for the good of the soul. For instance, I have hitherto thought of nothing the whole day but temporal things, such as, how I should live before the world according to my state and occupation, how my family and myself should eat, drink, and dress, and worse than all, I have hardly ever had a pure intention of doing all that for God's sake. Now, that will not do any longer. Why should I lose so much time? Could I not employ it much more profitably? From this day forward, therefore, till the day of my death, I will manage matters more prudently; I will observe a better order during the day. I will cut off one or two hours from my ordinary unnecessary sleep, to mortify myself for God's sake and for the good of my soul; before doing anything else, I will hear Mass, unless charity or necessity prevents me; on Sundays and holydays I will assist at the sermon in order to be encouraged to do good; I will not say, as I have hitherto said: Seven or eight o'clock is too early; no, five or four o'clock is not too early for me to serve God! On the same days I will devote at least half an hour to spiritual reading; every evening before going to rest I will say my evening prayers and make the examination of conscience with my family, and that will not injure, but greatly benefit my household. Even if I should make less temporal profit by living thus, what does it matter? I must make good the losses I have caused my soul during my life. Hitherto I have had many troubles, discomforts, crosses, and trials from my own family and from others every day, but I have borne them unwillingly and impatiently, and given way to anger and vindictiveness. To what purpose? For the future I shall bear those crosses better; formerly I have suffered spiritual loss from them, but now, since I cannot avoid

them when they come, I will derive great profit from them for my soul, by bearing them with patience and resignation to the will of God, knowing that I well deserve them for my sins, for which I have so often incurred the eternal punishment of hell. Hitherto I have been to confession and communion not more than four times or even only once in the year. Foolish man that I was! The Sacraments are the fountains through which we receive the grace of God; I must therefore amend in this particular; during the short time that is left to me, I will go to confession and communion every fortnight at least, and try to gain all the indulgences I can, so as to escape the punishment due to my past sins. I have hitherto spent much money in pleasure-seeking and in following the usages of the world for pride and vanity's sake; what is the use of that extravagance? I will use my money in future for the good of my soul; I will send it on before me to Heaven by the hands of the poor. I have indulged very much in sensuality and bodily comforts, but that is not the way to go to Heaven. Henceforth I will mortify my eyes, ears, tongue, and hands; I will seek less pleasure and practise more self-denial, eat and drink less and fast more, talk less and pray more, go less amongst men and spend more time in communing with God, and I will never more commit a deliberate sin and always try to fulfil the will of God as well as I can; such shall be the order of every remaining day and year of my life. That is the way to redeem the time, my dear brethren, and to make good the loss sustained in the past. Thus you may redeem the time, or, as the Greek Text has it, redeem the occasions, namely, for the occasions of good which you have hitherto neglected, or used for an evil purpose.

And perform the works of virtue with more zeal and frequency.

Finally, to redeem lost time is to perform the above-mentioned works of devotion and virtue with all the more diligence, zeal, and attention. We shall again make use of a simile to explain this point. There are six people travelling together, who wish to reach the same town before night. They talk and laugh as they journey along. One of them who is thirsty goes into a tavern to get something to drink and tells his companions to go on and he will overtake them. But he stops a whole hour drinking, so that his companions have gone on a long distance; how is he to manage so as to overtake them? Oh, he thinks, I can do that easily enough; if they only continue walking as slowly as before, I shall soon come up with them. He therefore walks much faster, raises his feet quicker, and only takes one

step, where he would before have taken three, and so in half an hour he rejoins his companions. If he continued to run along like that, he would reach the town before them. Thus he makes up for the time he spent in the tavern, and regains it with profit. Now, it is not necessary to explain, my dear brethren, that we are all travellers during this life, who are journeying to the same place, our heavenly fatherland, the city of God. We have now been many years on this journey, but what progress have we made? How often and how long have we delayed in this and that tavern along the road; I mean, how much have we allowed ourselves to be influenced by an inordinate love and attachment for creatures! How often have we not even gone backwards by sin! How slowly and tediously we have journeyed on when we were in the state of grace! And what little progress we have made in all that time! We still hope, however, to arrive at our destination, Heaven. The evening is approaching; many pious Christians who began the journey with us are now far ahead. There is nothing for us to do but to walk faster, that is, to perform our good works with greater zeal and frequency, and to act like the Egyptian King Mizerinus, although his circumstances were different from ours. It had been foretold to him by an oracle that he had only six years to live; I will make them, he said, into twelve. He then, as Nierenbergius relates, redoubled all his usual pastimes and pleasures, and ordered large fires and lanterns to be lit so as to turn night into day, that he might enjoy himself all the longer. We should learn from this foolish king to redouble our good works and our zeal in the service of God, so as to increase our years and make up for lost time.

For our merit increases, not according to the length of time, but the perfection of our good works.

The merits that one can heap up for Heaven do not always depend on the length of time one lives, even if he spends his whole life in the state of grace; nor do they depend on the number of good works that one performs every day, but rather on the manner in which they are performed, and on the amount of piety, zeal, and fervor, and the intention that one has. A holy Father says: God does not consider the number and the size of the gifts we give Him, but rather the desire and intention with which we give them.[1] A Christian who has spent long years in the service of God without committing grievous sin, who prays often, and performs many works of devotion, but, generally speaking, in a careless, indolent, and sleepy way, is like a richly

[1] Non respicit Deus quantum, sed ex quanto.

laden ship on the high seas, during a storm, when the wind blows from different quarters; the ship is driven about here and there, and manages to make very little way ahead, because the winds and waves oppose her progress. On the other hand, if the wind is fair it blows her along on her course and she makes as much way in an hour as she otherwise would in a day, and thus finishes in a short time a voyage that at other times would require months to accomplish. So it is also with a man who, having once come to a true knowledge of eternal things, endeavors with all his might to serve God under all circumstances. He puts all the zeal and fervor possible into everything he does, no matter how small it is; a single, "Lord, Thy will be done," that he utters in difficulties, a single act of mortification in temptations and dangers of sin, a single victory over human respect in company, a single sigh from the heart, "Lord, for Thy sake," amid his daily occupations, brings him farther on the way of salvation and nearer to Heaven than all the prayers, and masses, and good works do the careless Christian who is wanting in recollection, intention, earnestness, and diligence.

By diligence one can do more in a short time than another in a long time. Shown by a simile.

When Mutius Scaevola, the celebrated Roman soldier, saw that his countrymen had half lost a battle, he began to think of how the loss might be repaired. He noticed afar off amongst the enemy's forces, one who surpassed all the others in size and in magnificence of apparel. That, he said to himself, must be King Porsenna; if he were put out of the way, it would be an easy matter for us to conquer the enemy; and without more ado, he leaped on his horse, forced his way through the hostile ranks, and laid low the supposed king with a single blow. But he was deceived, not by his brave hand, but by his eye, for the man whom he killed was not the king, but one of his chief officers. He was then taken prisoner and brought before King Porsenna. Scaevola at once placed his right hand in the fire, and said: Oh, king, this right hand of mine has erred by slaying another in thy stead; it must now atone for its fault. And he held his hand in the fire until it was burnt off, apparently as little concerned at the pain he was suffering as if the hand did not belong to him. Martial, who celebrated this heroic deed in verse, asks who was Mutius, where was he born, and brought up, what other remarkable warlike deeds he had performed, and whether he was before that a man of great or of little authority among the Romans. But the poet answers his own question by saying: "After such an heroic act, there is no need to inquire what he

was before,"[1] for even if he had been the basest of men, that one action alone would suffice to render his name and fame immortal. In the same way I say, my dear brethren, if we find that we have done much evil and little good in our past lives, and that, therefore, we have a bad name before God, and have almost lost the battle for eternity, we must now take courage, and after having repented sincerely, we must begin to serve God with all our strength and with all possible zeal, and make a firm resolution to continue doing so to the end of our lives. Then it may be said of us: After such good conduct, our former carelessness may easily be forgotten; the loss of time will soon be made good, as the Holy Ghost assures us of those who die young after a holy life: "Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time."[2]

In that way even one's past sins may be the occasion of greater glory for him in Heaven.

Many of the most celebrated theologians teach that for some people the commission of grievous and manifold sins is even a sign of predestination to grace, and that there are many who would not enter Heaven at all, or who, at all events, would not have such a high place there, if they had not been grievous sinners. How can that be? Is it, then, a good thing to have sinned? By no means; sin is, and must always be condemned. Must one, then, sin in his youth, that he may live better afterwards? No, that is still worse. The doctrine alluded to is founded on the fact that a man, who has had the misfortune to sin often and grievously, through malice, when he gets an inspiration of grace and does penance, is often spurred on to greater zeal by the consideration of his former life, and does more good than if he had always remained innocent. For when I think that I have offended God, I must feel greatly humbled, and humility is the foundation of all Christian virtues, and makes the soul capable of receiving heavenly gifts and graces. The humility that makes me look upon myself as unworthy to live amongst men, and as fit only for the companionship of demons, effects in me a constant mildness, modesty, charity, and mercy towards others, even towards the poorest and lowliest. The consideration of my past offences makes me patient in enduring the trials of life, for if anything occurs to give me pain, I at once acknowledge that I have deserved it, and that, in fact, I have often deserved hell itself. Therefore, I say: "Lord, Thy will be done." The remembrance of my wicked life teaches me how patient God has been

[1] Scire piget, quid fecerit ante.

[2] Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa.—Sap. iv. 13.

with me in supporting me for such a long time, while I despised Him ; how exceedingly merciful He is in adopting me again as His beloved child, in preference to so many others who are now in hell for less sins than mine, and thus I am forced to love such a good and merciful God with my whole heart, to avoid offending Him by the least wilful sin, and to strain every nerve to do what is pleasing to Him. Thus the words of the Gospel are verified : "The last shall be first."[1] They who come into the vineyard at the eleventh hour receive the same reward as those who began at the first hour. Thus the public sinner, Magdalen, has more glory in Heaven than many hundreds of the innocent just, because as she had offended God more grievously, she served Him after her conversion more zealously. Hence, as St. Jerome says, Paul, who formerly persecuted the Church of Christ, became one of the greatest Apostles, and did more than any of them for the glory of God : "He was the last in rank, but the first in merit."[2]

Resolution thus to redeem the time lost.

That is the way, my dear brethren, to redeem the time that has been lost and misspent in the past, and to make good the damage suffered by the soul. What we have to do is to set to work zealously and on this very day, lest we fare like the Emperor Julius, of whom Suetonius tells us, that he intended to do great things for the good of Rome, of Italy, and of the whole world, and had already begun, when he was surprised by death and had to leave everything unfinished. "While thus thinking and acting, he was surprised by death."[3] Ah, how many Christians are hurried away by death, at the very moment when they resolve to lead a better life ! Therefore, let us all cry out to Heaven, with zeal and determination : My Lord and my God, I thank Thee infinitely for having borne so patiently for so many years the many sins I have committed, for not allowing me to die in a state that would have separated me from Thee forever, and condemned me to hell, and for having given me time to repent and amend my life. I declare before Heaven and earth that this last day of the year shall also be the last of my wickedness and sin, that I will henceforth unceasingly deplore; and that it shall be the first on which I consecrate myself wholly to Thy service for all the time that remains to me ! I know I am not worthy of a longer life, because, up to the present I have made such a bad use of my time; yet, I hope, in Thy infinite mercy, of which

[1] Erunt novissimi primi. [2] Novissimus in ordine, primus in meritis est.
[3] Talia agentem atque cogitantem mors prævenit.

Thou hast given me such ardent proof, that Thou wilt not refuse me the time that I am now resolved to employ in Thy service. Not a single moment of it shall pass without profit, without a good intention, or without my doing something for Thy honor and my salvation, even if I had a hundred years to live. But if I must die soon, and there is only a short time left for me to prove my fidelity and love towards Thee, then Thou, oh, most good and merciful God, wilt take my present earnest will and penitent heart for the deed. Amen.

My dear brethren, if we really mean this we shall all end this year most happily, and that is my wish for each and every one of you, along with my earnest desire that you may begin the New Year happily.

Another Introduction for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception:

Text.

Dominus possedit me in initio viarum suarum.—Prov. viii. 22. *From the Epistle of this Feast.*

"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways."

The most blessed Queen of Heaven, Mary, the Mother of God, is that most pure Virgin, of whom alone amongst all mere creatures, those words can be said with truth: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways," for not a single moment of my whole life had the wicked serpent the least part in me. Even in the first moment of my conception the Lord took up His dwelling in me by sanctifying grace, and remained with me always, so that the least stain of sin or imperfection could never be found in me. Oh, most holy and always immaculate Virgin! We all rejoice with thee, and congratulate thee from our hearts! Yet, while we thus exult on account of thy honor, we poor children of Eve must bemoan our pitiful condition; we are conceived in sin and are born enemies of God! But our forefather Adam has brought that misery upon us. Ah, would that I could say: "The Lord possessed me,"[1] from the moment in which I was cleansed in baptism and in which the Lord gave me His sanctifying grace! But, past years of my life, what have you to say to that? Alas, when I ask you, how often do I find that I have driven God out of my soul by sin! How few the years, months, weeks, and days of which I can say with truth: "The

[1] Dominus possedit me.

Lord possessed me"! But all the time that I have not spent in the grace of God is lost to me forever, and I have hitherto hardly ever thought of that! If my life, that is already far advanced, were to come to an end, what would be my fate? What am I to do now? This very day, on which the most pure and immaculate Virgin reminds me of the years I have spent in sin, I will begin to examine my past life, and to redeem the time I have lost, as St. Paul warns us: "Redeeming the time."[1] You should all profit by that warning, my dear brethren, especially those of you who are now advanced in years. To encourage you to do so is the object of this sermon, which is partly a meditation and partly an instruction. Intention: We must examine our past lives to redeem lost time. The first part. How we are to redeem that time. The second part. Oh, Holy Ghost, etc.—*continues as before.*

SEVENTY-FIRST SERMON.

ON THE MAKING GOOD USE OF PRESENT AND FUTURE TIME, ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

Text.

Et Jesus proficiebat sapientia et ætate, et gratia apud Deum et homines.—Luke ii. 52.

"And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men."—*Preached on the first Sunday after Epiphany.*

Introduction.

According to His human nature, Jesus was only a Child of twelve years and yet He was the Teacher of the doctors, and was every day occupied in procuring the honor and glory of His heavenly Father, and was the Holy of holies! Therefore, the possession of sanctifying grace does not depend on how long one lives, nor on whether one is young or old, but on the use made of time. For a man who is zealous in the service of God can gain more merits for Heaven in a month, than a tepid Christian in several years; as I proved to you last Sunday, when I showed

[1] Tempus redimentes.

you how to redeem lost time, according to the warning of the Apostle, "redeeming the time," by increased zeal in good works. There is yet another warning of the Holy Ghost with regard to the time that God may still mercifully bestow upon us: "Son, observe the time"[1] that thou hast, and that still remains for thee to live. If it were to extend to a hundred years, oh, do not squander a moment of it; make a good use of it, so as to imitate our Lord, and increase, not merely in age, but in the grace of God. It is to this that I wish to exhort you to-day.

Plan of Discourse.

We should all, no matter who we are, but more especially the young, make a good use of present and future time for the welfare of our souls. That is, alas, done by very few. The whole subject.

Christ Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, Thy Father, who hast taught the Doctors in the Temple when Thou wast only a Child of twelve years old, teach me and all of us to-day, by Thy example, to use our time to this end and for the proper purpose! This we ask of Thee, through the intercession of Thy Mother and the holy angels guardian.

What is very precious and useful must be carefully guarded and not be squandered. A young, prudent, and clever man had once the good fortune, according to the world's way of thinking, to be espoused to a very rich lady. A few days before the wedding he thought to himself how he should manage with the fortune that was about to become his. My bride will bring me a rich dowry, he thought; ought we to spend it, and have a pleasant time with it? But if we did that, it would last only for a time, and what should we have, then, to live on? No; the best thing is to lend it all out at interest, so that it will bring us in a yearly revenue, on which we can live for a long time. A wise resolution, certainly! But, my good young man, you must not reckon without your host; you must first see whether your bride will agree to that arrangement! In fact, a few months after their wedding, during which time he allowed her, as is usual, to do as she pleased, he found out that the fortune she brought with her was spent upon costly dresses, lace, ribbons, head-gear, bracelets, earrings, and other articles of female adornment. He was rather taken aback at this, and thought to himself: That is,

What is precious must be carefully guarded.

[1] Fili, conserva tempus.

indeed, a fine way to lay out the money at interest. Whenever my wife goes out, she brings her whole fortune with her. I thought we would have had a fixed capital, that would have brought us a yearly income; but what could be more unsteady than a capital that goes in and out of the house every day. If things are to go on like that, I need not have rejoiced so much at getting a rich wife, for she will dispose of my whole income in that way. You see, my dear brethren, that the good man had reason enough to complain of his wife's extravagance.

Time is a very precious treasure.

Now to come seriously to our subject: every year that is given to me, and to each one of us, what else is it but a fortune that the great Father of all gives to the human soul as to His beloved child and the Spouse of His Holy Spirit? And what a splendid fortune it is! What a rich and fruitful capital, provided only it is well employed and made good use of! So rich is it, and so precious, that if the Saints in Heaven could feel any discontent, they would envy us the possession of it, and the greatest torment of the souls in purgatory, the greatest despair of the reprobate in hell, arise from the fact that they cannot any longer have that precious gift. It is a common and a true saying, that it is only the sick who know the value of health; he who has never been ill cannot value health properly. Let us then hear what they have to say who have lost time forever, and can never have it any more.

As the blessed in Heaven know.

Blessed souls who now behold God, and possess Him securely, I expect no answer from you; for if I were to ask you how you value time, you would say to me, as my faith teaches me already by the holy Apostle St. Paul: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him."[1] Go and tell all men, you would add, that this is the interest we reap from having well invested the capital of the short time of our lives on earth.

The souls in purgatory.

Poor souls who are still in purgatory, tell us the value of that gift, which the good God bestows on us, when He gives us this fleeting time to live in. Ah, it seems to me I hear you cry, as was once really the case: "If we had only one hour!"[2] If we had that priceless treasure that you now possess! We do not ask for a whole year, we would be satisfied with a day or an hour

[1] Oculus non vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit, quæ præparavit Deus iis, qui diligunt illum.—I. Cor. ii. 9.

[2] Ah, si daretur hora!

and what terrible torments we could free ourselves from in that short time! We have misspent only a little of the capital that was given to us; some moments here and there we have lost, and on that account we must now suffer the painful loss and unspeakable torment of not being yet able to possess our highest Good; so that perhaps for many years we must bemoan in this lake of fire the loss of our precious time! "Ah, if only one hour were given to us!" This should suffice to teach you who still live on earth, what a precious thing time is.

The reprobate in hell.

Despairing spirits, lost mortals, you, I mean, who are in hell forever, tell us how we are to value time! Humbert, a holy religious, was once meditating on eternity; while absorbed in thought, he heard a mournful voice that nearly broke his heart with pity; but he took courage, and asked whose voice it was, and why it complained so. I am one of those unhappy souls, was the answer, one of those wretched beings who have no more time! I have been sent here by divine command to teach you, and others through you, the priceless value of the short time of your lives. Know, then, that of all the torments of hell, the worst is the eternal remembrance of the time we have so miserably squandered during our lives. Ah, if only the least part of it were now given back to us! But there is no hope of that. There is and will be no time for us any more.[1] Suppose, my dear brethren, that God placed me as a merchant at the gate of hell, to sell time to the reprobate; how dearly would they purchase it, think you? Rich glutton, who are now in the midst of the flames, and desire a drop of water to cool your tongue, what would you give me for a few minutes of that time which you spent in eating and drinking? Ah, would be his answer, you ask what I would give; ask rather what I would not give. If I had all the treasures of a thousand worlds, I would give them with pleasure. Cruel Herod, you have now been more than eighteen hundred years in hell; I have half an hour's time here for you; what will you give me for it? Everything; a thousand kingdoms, if I had them! Despairing Judas, where are the thirty pieces of silver that you got for your treason? Will you give them to me? I have got one moment of time for you. Ah, would that I could have it to do penance in! Willingly would I endure all pains and torments imaginable for a million of years, if I could only gain that one moment. Give it me, other lost souls would cry out: I will give you twice as much,

[1] Tempus non erit amplius.—Apoc. x. 6.

a hundred thousand times as much for that moment! But away with you all! Not one of you shall have a single moment for all eternity. "Time shall be no longer."[1]

Therefore, we must guard this treasure and make the best use of it.

That is the precious gift, the rich treasure that the divine generosity has bestowed upon us all, my dear brethren, and upon us alone who still journey through this life to our fatherland; and He has given it to us in such a manner, that nothing really belongs to us on earth, but the time that is given us, as St. Bernard says: "Time alone belongs to us; whatever else we have belongs to others."[2] Honors, riches, money, food, drink, and clothing, are external things that we cannot have full dominion over to do with as we wish, and they can be taken from us even against our will. "Time alone belongs to us,"[3] and is fully in our power. The wife cannot take it away from her husband by extravagance in dress, unless he consents to her doing so; nor can the husband squander his wife's time by gambling and drinking; no man on earth can take it away from me, unless he deprives me of life. Of course, men may talk to and cajole me, and thus prevent me from doing what I wish to do, for instance, from going to Church to hear Mass or a sermon; but they cannot hinder me from employing that same time well or ill, according to my own will and intention. This is the precious treasure that you, Christians, who are still in the bloom of youth, can naturally look forward to enjoy for a longer period, than those who are already advanced in years. What shall we do with this rich treasure? Shall we allow it to go in and out; shall we squander it in amusement, idleness, and pleasure-seeking? Oh, no; that would be bad management indeed! And what must we do with it, then? We must lay it out at good interest, so that we may have profit enough from it to live on for eternity. "Son," is the warning of the Holy Ghost, "observe the time"[4] that is given to thee; do not lose the least particle of it: "Let not a particle of a good day overpass thee"[5] without profiting by it.

That is not generally done by young people, who waste their time in wickedness.

But, alas, beautiful time, how thou art thrown away, especially by young people! Such is the complaint of even the heathen philosopher Seneca; how much more, then, should not Christians make the same complaint! He says: "A great part of life is spent in doing evil, the greatest part in doing

[1] Tempus non erit amplius.
[2] Solum tempus nostrum est, reliqua aliena sunt.
[3] Solum tempus nostrum est. [4] Fili, conserva tempus.
[5] Particula bonæ diei non te prætereat.

nothing, and nearly the whole of it in doing what one should not do."[1] What a sad use to make of such a priceless treasure! But alas, it is the case with many! Let each one examine his conscience, and see how he has hitherto spent the years of his life; will he not find that a great part of them has been spent in doing evil? It is well known how St. Ambrose acted so as to insure greater reverence being paid to the ground round the Church. He took a handful of earth from it and squeezed it in his hands until blood came out of it, by which miracle he showed that the ground was bedewed with the blood of martyrs, and should therefore be held in great respect. If a St. Ambrose could thus squeeze in his hands a good part of the lives of many youths and maidens, what would come out of it but the filth of impurity and other hateful vices? We might say of them with the Prophet David: "His ways are filthy at all times."[2] Day and night, Advent and Christmas-time, Lent, Easter, the holiest times of the year, all full of sin! Perhaps he would find some who, in their childhood and at the first dawn of reason, committed sins that still burden their consciences, because they never confessed them, or confessed them improperly, through shame, or at all events were wanting in true sorrow and resolution because they remained in the proximate occasion, and never did penance as they ought, so that if he were to examine the fifteen, twenty, or thirty years of their lives since they came to the use of reason, he would not find perhaps a single day which was wholly devoted to God and to their salvation; not a single day that they did not spend in sin and at enmity with God; not a single day on which they did anything really good and meritorious of Heaven. Precious time, priceless treasure, that is thus thrown away in a manner that cannot be sufficiently deplored! Oh, my God, when I think of it, my heart is like to break with sorrow and repentance! I must say with Thy servant David: "The sins of my youth do not remember."[3] The first, best, and most precious part of my life, which Thou hast specially reserved for Thyself, has been snatched away by the devil, with my consent! I hope, my dear brethren, that none of you have cause to lament thus with truth, and therefore I will consider the other class of people who, according to the philosopher, lose their time.

[1] Magna pars vitæ elabitur male agentibus, maxima nihil agentibus, tota aliud agentibus.

[2] Inquinatæ sunt viæ illius in omni tempore.—Ps. ix. 26.

[3] Delicta juventutis meæ, ne memineris.—Ibid. xxiv. 7.

Doing nothing.

"The greatest part of life is spent in doing nothing," [1] or in doing things that are worth nothing. Let us consider for a moment the daily life of idle people. They sleep till late in the day, or if they cannot sleep, they lie idly in bed, thinking God knows what; they say their morning prayers while they are dressing, and it is well if they do even that much; they then spend an hour before the glass adorning themselves; if it is not too cold, they go to Church, more to see and be seen than to offer sacrifice to God. I have said nothing of their breakfast, and now it is already noon and time for them to think of dinner; then they go out walking and pay visits, or amuse themselves until supper-time; after that they go to bed, or to some ball or party, and spend the following day in bed. These are the chief occupations of their lives; days like that make up their weeks, the weeks become months and the months years, which thus pass in idleness. A certain poet symbolizes this very well. He represents the sun in a golden wagon, drawn by twelve beautiful maidens to represent the hours, all of whom were provided with wings and arrows as a sign of the swiftness of their flight; but some of the hours were very large, others of moderate size, and others again very small. Mercury, the messenger of the gods, meets them and asks why they are so unlike in size. The smallest answered: We are the hours of prayer; the next said: We are the hours of worldly business; and the third, and tallest: We are the hours of sleeping, eating, drinking, and amusement. This is very true of a great many, especially of young people, who are in the best part of their lives, and who, if they look back for twenty or thirty years, to see what they have done for the one important concern of their soul during that time, will find that the fewest and shortest hours have been given to it, while all the others have been spent in doing nothing.

That is not a Christian way to live.

But is that the way to live as a Christian, or even as a reasoning human being? Seneca once passed by a fine house, and asked who lived in it. He was told that it was occupied by Servilius Vaccia, who never did anything but eat, drink, sleep, and enjoy himself. Ah, in that case, said Seneca, you ought not to say that Vaccia lives here, but "Vaccia is buried here;" [2] because all that belongs to a reasonable being has died out of him, and there is nothing more left to him, but to lead a sensual life, like a beast. Oh, how many houses of Christians there are, over which one might with truth write the epitaph,

[1] Maxima pars vitæ nihil agentibus. [2] Hic Vaccia situs est.

here lies buried the man,[1] the woman, the youth, or the maiden, who spends the very least part of life in a human, Christian, and supernatural manner! Why should precious time be thus wasted? Have we nothing else to do on earth? "Why stand you here all the day idle?"[2] is the question that Christ asks us. Can one of us answer like the laborers in the Gospel: "No man hath hired us"?[3] In fact, young people often say they have nothing to do, they have no household to look after, no children to attend to, and therefore, they must do something to pass away the time. Ah, God help them, I could say, with St. Bernard; must a man then try to invent some means of spending his precious time? Have you really nothing to do? Have you no sins to repent of, for which you still owe a terrible debt to the divine justice? Have you nothing to do? Have you not to gain the friendship of a great God, who is worthy of all love and service from you? Have you not an immortal soul to care for, which, if it is once lost, can never be redeemed and is lost for eternity? Have you not a terrible enemy to conquer, against whose assaults you cannot be too careful in protecting yourself day and night? Have you not a strict judgment to fear, in which an account will be demanded of every idle word, and your good works themselves will be scrutinized? Have you not to prepare for death, that comes like a thief in the night, to hurry you away when you least expect? Have you not to labor for a long eternity, to avoid the never-ending pains of hell, to gain the everlasting joys of Heaven? And you have nothing to do! Say, rather: Oh, I have a great deal to do, of which I think very little now, and therefore, I lose so much precious time in doing nothing! Well may you say, St. Bernard: "There is nothing more precious than time; but alas, nothing is valued so little nowadays,"[4] or squandered more foolishly! A great part of it is lost in doing evil, the greater part in doing nothing, the whole of it almost in doing something else besides what one ought to do. This is the way in which a third class of people lose their time.

In doing something else. How foolish that is. Shown by examples in the form of a simile.

There are many who do not do evil nor live in idleness; but they have their hands and heads full from morning till night. With what? Principally with things that do not concern them, and for which they are not in this world. Tell me, my dear

[1] Hic situs est. [2] Quid hic statis tota die otiosi?—Matth. xx. 6.
[3] Nemo nos conduxit.—Ibid. 7.
[4] Nihil pretiosius tempore: sed heu! nihil vilius hodie æstimatur.

brethren, if the Roman emperor were to take all his soldiers away from Italy and Hungary, on account of a war with the Turks, and were to deliver up those beautiful countries, the defence of which cost so much brave Christian blood, as a prey to the enemy, and on the other hand, to set all Germany in motion, enrolling a hundred thousand additional troops and making alliances with different princes, with the sole object of gaining possession of some desert district of Lybia or the Caucasus, where not even a blade of grass can grow, much less anything required for man's support; what would you think of such a project? Would not each one of you say, like the disciples, when Magdalen poured the ointment on the head of our Lord: Why this waste?[1] Why should such a vast army, that it took such trouble to collect together, be forced to make a long and toilsome journey into a country that is not worth conquering? It should be sent to a rich and new country, or at least should be used to protect its own land against foreign invasion. Certainly, sovereigns are wont to make a better use of their power. Formerly people used to laugh at Domitian, who, although he had the whole burden of the Roman Empire on his shoulders, used to spend his time catching flies. Hartabus, a king of Hyrcania, devoted the most of his attention to trapping mice and moles. Bientes, a king of Lydia, was fond of catching frogs. Orepus, King of Macedon, used to make lanterns. All these people were not idle, they had their occupations; but occupations that were not suitable for kings. We laugh when we see the trouble that children take to build dolls' houses, to make castles out of cards and birds out of paper, which latter they tie to cords and run after for hours, until they are tired. They are busy, too, and are often more interested in what they are doing than many grown-up people are about their household concerns. Still, we think, it is only child's play, they are acting as children act.

So do most men.

Oh, angels of Heaven, what do you often think when you see what our occupations are? Running around the world, crossing the seas, fatiguing the head with study, writing whole reams of paper full, working till the perspiration rolls down from our foreheads, laboring the whole day and breaking our rest at night to scheme and plan, with our minds full of thoughts, our hearts full of desires, and all for this earth, all for this miserable vale of tears, in which we are not to live, but merely to travel like pilgrims. Such are our occupations! And yet, if all the goods

[1] Utquid perditio hæc?—Matth. xxvi. 8.

of this world were heaped together, compared to eternal goods, they would be of infinitely less value than a fly, a mole, a frog, a child's house of cards. These, I say, are the occupations that take up the most of our time. We do hardly anything for our souls' sake, hardly anything with a good intention for God's sake, or for a happy eternity! Holy faith assist me! Sacred justice lend me Thy infallible scales! Place on one side a single grain of sanctifying grace, such as a servant of God gains by a devout Our Father, or by bearing trials with patience and resignation to the divine will, or such as a poor servant-maid can gain by sweeping out the house with a good intention, which can be elicited in a moment. Place on the other side all the wealth of Peru, the Indies, and the whole world. Which of the two will weigh the heavier? Which is the more valuable? Oh, certainly, that grace is far more precious than all the treasures of earth! St. Thomas Aquinas says: "A single grace is of more value than all the wealth of the universe."[1] And yet, that grace, which we might gain at any moment, and increase, too, even by our daily necessary occupations, if we perform them with a pure conscience and a supernatural intention, we throw away, while we run like children after other worthless things that it costs us a deal of trouble to secure! Thus the precious time of our lives is spent in doing something else besides what we ought to do.

What great blindness!

Is it for that we are in this world? Have we not another most important business in which to occupy our time? What happened to Anthony and Cleopatra is a well-known fact. They went once to catch fish for amusement; the queen, in order to prove that she was the more skilful and to have an opportunity of teasing her lover afterwards, found out from an experienced fisherman what the best bait was; so that she succeeded in catching many large fishes, while Anthony had to be content with a few small and worthless ones. He kept his ill-humor concealed for a time and appeared to be glad of the queen's good fortune. But at last he lost patience, on seeing that her success called forth congratulations on all sides, while his want of luck was greeted with derisive laughter. Cleopatra, seeing that he was out of temper, calmed him by saying to him: "You are born to fish for kings and kingdoms."[2] Do not be vexed at your want of success in an art that is not worthy of you; that

[1] Bonum gratiæ unius majus est bonum bono naturæ totius universi.

[2] Natus es reges et regna piscari.

is the art you are best acquainted with ; we women, who do not understand it, have to be content with less noble pursuits. Christians, you understand what I mean by this anecdote. We are not born to catch worthless flies and frogs, but to fish in time for an eternal kingdom. Christian merchant, you are not born to count money, but to bear a royal sceptre in your hands. Woman, you are not born for the worthless comforts and amusements of this earth, but to seek here the eternal joys of Heaven. Maiden, you are not born to play and amuse yourself, to adorn and trick yourself out so as to please others, but that you may be one day clad with the sun, so as to win the heart of the King of Heaven. Young man, you are not born to eat and drink, to sleep, to go out walking, or to spend your time in useless talk; those occupations are far too low for your great end. You are born to gain a kingdom [1] which cost the Son of God thirty-three years' labor, nay, even His very life's blood, to regain for you after you had lost it.

Exhortation to make good use of time.

Therefore, I repeat, by way of conclusion, the exhortation of the Holy Ghost: "My son," my daughter, "observe the time" [2] that is given to you for such an important business. "Let not a particle overpass thee." [3] If you lose a moment, you lose a whole kingdom that you might have gained in it. Do not say, as young people do: I have time enough to gain Heaven afterwards. Ah, afterwards, fatal word that has brought many to hell! There is no Christian among the reprobate, who had not the same intention of working out his salvation afterwards. How can you dispose of future time, when you are not certain of a moment? Even if you still have many years to live, according to the divine decree, can you say that afterwards you will have the favorable time, the acceptable time, the time of peace and salvation that the Sacred Scripture speaks of so often? Unhappy Jerusalem, was the cry of our Saviour: "If Thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace." [4] Thy walls shall stand for thirty-seven years longer, but not for thy welfare; thy inhabitants will be scattered over the world till the end of time: "Because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." [5] Make a good use, therefore, of the time which you now have, and do not squander the rich treasure on which you must live for eternity. When Conrad,

[1] Natus es regna piscari. [2] Fili, conserva tempus. [3] Particula te non prætereat.
[4] Si cognovisses et tu, et quidem in hac die tua, quæ ad pacem tibi.—Luke xix. 42.
[5] Eo, quod non cognoveris tempus visitationis tuæ.—Ibid. 44.

Bishop of Hildesheim, was once studying during the night a sermon that he intended preaching to his people on the following day, he had an ecstasy in which he saw a hall draped in mourning. Jesus Christ was seated therein as a stern Judge, full of majesty and surrounded by many persons of noble aspect who acted as His councillors. In this august assembly the bishop beheld one of his most intimate friends, a German prelate of princely birth, still young in years, who stood there as an accused person; he was examined and condemned to death, whereupon he was stripped of his priestly robes by the angels and delivered over to the executioner to be beheaded. When this was accomplished, all the councillors stood up and left the hall, one after the other, repeating the words of St. Paul: "Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good."[1] When Conrad came to himself again, and as he was thinking of this vision, the news was brought to him that the prelate in question had died suddenly. Conrad deeply deplored the sad fate of his friend, and never forgot, during his whole life, the words: "Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good." Let us, too, my dear Christians, take those words to ourselves, that they may spur us on daily to make a holy use of the time that still remains to us, and that death may not come before we carry out our good resolutions. Alas, what will become of us in that sad night when we shall wish to work good and shall not be able, as Christ warns us: "The night cometh when no man can work"?[2] While time lasts for us, let us, then, hasten to do penance, to gain grace and to attain heavenly glory.

Resolution to do so really for the future.

In all documents the year is mentioned as, "the year of our Lord,"[3] or "the year of salvation."[4] The words *Anno Domini* are also written in all contracts, wills, and epitaphs. They ought to be written also, and with truth, on all the years, weeks, days, and hours of our lives: To-day is the day of the Lord; this hour is the hour of the Lord and of salvation; therefore, it must not be employed for any other purpose, but for the Lord alone and for my salvation. Away, then, with all useless thoughts and words, with all idle and foolish pastimes that have already stolen so many golden hours from me, in which I might have earned an eternity of glory; I bid farewell to all these follies forever! I will in future so divide each day as to give to my body only what

[1] Ergo, dum tempus habemus, operemur bonum.—Galat. vi. 10.
[2] Venit nox, quando nemo potest operari.—John ix. 4.
[3] Anno Domini. [4] Anno salutis.

is barely necessary for it, that I may serve my God, and to my worldly occupations only what my state of life absolutely requires, and even those I will perform safely for Thy sake, oh, my God, to whom all time properly belongs! If I were certain that I had still a hundred years to live, would it be too much, O Lord, if I were to give all that time to Thee? Would it be too soon for me to commence now to love Thee alone with my whole heart, who hast loved me from all eternity, and created me for no other end but to love Thee, and hast, moreover, bestowed countless benefits on me every moment of my life? O God, deserving of all my love, I now begin, and with Thy grace will continue to serve Thee, so that when death comes, be it soon or late, I may say with Thy servant Hilarion: Go forth, my soul, why shouldst thou fear? Thou hast served God for thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years, and hast not wasted a moment of that time.[1] Go forth[2] from time to the place where thou hast safely invested thy treasure, to a joyful eternity. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of St. Thomas, Apostle:

Text.

Thomas autem, unus ex duodecim, qui dicitur Didymus, non erat cum eis, quando venit Jesus.—John xx. 24.

"Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came."

What a loss that was to Thomas: "He was not with them when Jesus came"![3] If he had made a better use of his time and had remained with the other Apostles, he would have also had the happiness of being visited by Jesus, and would not have been guilty of that incredulity, obstinacy, and presumption that led him afterwards to doubt the resurrection of Christ, although Christ Himself had foretold it, and the other Apostles, as well as the holy women, had actually conversed with Jesus after He had risen from the dead. So much depends, my dear brethren, on making a good and careful use of time. A single moment, in which I yield to an inspiration of divine grace, may be the beginning of all the special graces that I afterwards receive, and of my eternal salvation. A single moment, in which I omit some good work that God requires of me, may be the cause of many

[1] Egredere, anima mea, septuaginta annis servisti Deo.
[2] Egredere. [3] Non erat cum eis, quando venit Jesus.

sins, and of my eternal damnation. Therefore, the Holy Ghost warns us: "My son," my daughter, "observe the time"[1] that thou now hast and wilt have; do not waste a single moment of it! And this is the subject of the present exhortation,—*continues as before.*

SEVENTY-SECOND SERMON.

ON SHROVE-TIDE.

Subject.

No more liberty is allowed in unlawful things at Shrove-tide, than at any other time.—*Preached on Quinquagesima Sunday.*

Text.

Tradetur enim gentibus.—Luke xviii. 32.
"He shall be delivered to the Gentiles."

Introduction.

If there is any time in the year at which insult is offered to our Lord by sinners, at which Christians deliver up their Redeemer again to be mocked at by heathens and to be ill-treated by them, it is Shrove-tide. Nor does this statement require any proof, if we only consider for a moment what happens during those days. Generally speaking, people imagine, or at least act as if they believed it to be true, that everything is allowed during that time—dissipation, drunkenness, impurity, dangerous and heathenish amusements and the desecration of Sundays and holy-days are mere recreations that are perfectly lawful during Shrove-tide. Permit me now, my dear brethren, to disprove this false idea, and to show that, although it is Shrove-tide, not a whit more liberty is given to do evil, or to place the soul in danger of sin, than at any other time. I do not intend to speak of any danger or vice in particular, but of all in general. We know from the law of God and of His Church what is sinful in itself; our own reason and experience teach us what are the dangerous occasions of sin. I repeat my

[1] Fili, conserva tempus.

Plan of Discourse.

No more liberty is allowed in unlawful things at Shrove-tide, than at any other time. He who speaks and acts contrary to this, delivers up Jesus Christ to the Gentiles to be mocked. This I shall endeavor to prove to the end that good Christians, such as I believe the most of those to be who are assembled here, may rejoice that they have no part in the dissipation of the thoughtless, and may be encouraged to serve God faithfully, even at Shrove-tide. How happy I should be if I were the occasion of saving even one soul from committing a single sin that it would otherwise have committed!

Almighty God, Ruler of hearts, Thou must do that! I hope that Thou wilt even do more! This grace we ask of Thee through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, to whom Thou canst not refuse anything, and through the holy angels, whom Thou hast given to all of us to protect us from the assaults of the devil.

At Shrove-tide everything is the same as at other times.

If it were really the case that more freedom is allowed in these days than at other times, then that must come either from some change in God, the Ruler of all, who does not wish us to serve Him now the same as at other times, or from some change in our state of life and religion which does not require such great holiness of life from us at this time, or else from some change in our own souls, which at this season have a business to attend to that is far different from the business of their salvation. One of these three must be the cause of the change and relaxation of morals, for I can find no other. But none of these three things happens and, therefore, this part of the year should not differ from the other parts, as far as the service of God is concerned.

God is always the same.

It is Shrove-tide, but what then? Is there on that account a different God in Heaven? Is not God the same now as He was at Christmas-time? Has He, perhaps, lost His majesty, His authority, or His supremacy? Was He better, holier, wiser, or juster a few months ago, than He is to-day? Is He worthy of less honor, fear, and love? Has He given up His honor during these days? Does He wish us to fear and love Him less? Has He in this season given free leave to commit all kinds of vices? Does He hate and condemn sin less now than formerly; or has He, perhaps, concealed Himself, so as not to see what we do, or does He close His eyes to our folly and dissipation? Perhaps He has lost His power and cannot punish sin as severely as before? Has He assured us that we can go into the danger and not

perish? Where is the proof of that? How is it that this season has the privilege of allowing what is forbidden at other times? It is an article of faith that the world and its usages are at enmity with the service of God; could there be any time, then, at which worldly pleasures might be indulged in without restraint, and when people are allowed to forget God, to serve the world, and to follow its corrupt usages? Oh, no, God is always the same unchangeable Lord, who says of Himself: "I am the Lord, and I change not."[1]

And must be honored and served even during Shrove-tide.

He is still the same most perfect God, who deserves our love during Shrove-tide as well as during Lent; the same infinite, omnipresent God, who must be honored in all places over the whole world; the same eternal God, who must be served at all times; the same jealous God, who cannot allow any one to share our hearts with Him, nor permit Himself to be defrauded of a moment of time; the same God of infinite holiness, who must hate and detest sin always. "To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike."[2] He still remains the same most just God, who can allow no wickedness to go unpunished, and who cannot give to any one a single moment in which he may lawfully sin. Ecclesiasticus says: "He hath given no man license to sin;"[3] at no time in the year can He allow sin. He remains the same provident God who has never promised His help and grace to those who expose themselves to danger without necessity; nay, He assures us, on His own word, that He will abandon such presumptuous men to their own weakness, and will let them perish in the danger; for His threats and warnings hold good at Shrove-tide, as well as at any other time. "Give not place to the devil."[4] "Woe to that man by whom scandal cometh,"[5] that is, by whom others are placed in the dangerous occasion of doing, speaking, or thinking evil. The warning of Christ in the Gospel of St. Luke holds good at all times: "And take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness,"[6] at any time or season. So also with the words: "What I say to you, I say to all: Watch."[7] Be careful; close the gates of your senses, that death may not enter your souls. It always remains true that: "He that loveth danger shall

[1] Ego Dominus, et non mutor.—Malach. iii. 6.
[2] Odio sunt Deo impius, et impietas ejus.—Sap. xiv. 9.
[3] Nemini dedit spatium peccandi.—Eccl. xv. 21.
[4] Nolite locum dare diabolo.—Ephes. iv. 27.
[5] Væ homini illi, per quem scandalum venit.—Matth. xviii. 7.
[6] Attendite vobis, ne forte graventur corda vestra in crapula et ebrietate.—Luke xxi. 34.
[7] Quod autem vobis dico, omnibus dico: Vigilate.—Mark xiii. 37.

perish in it."[1] And what the Apostle says of those sins that are generally committed at Shrove-tide is always true also: "They who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God."[2]

So that He must be served then as well as at other times.

Therefore it is not allowed to lead a more careless, dissipated life at this season than at any other, as far as God is concerned; and if you say the contrary, you belong to the rabble who delivered up Jesus to the scorn of the Gentiles, and you act most unjustly towards your Supreme Lord if you take anything away, during these days, from the love and service you owe Him. Do you think, perhaps, that a whole year or a whole life-time would be too much for the service of God, unless it were interrupted by the dissipations of Shrove-tide, although He has created you out of nothing, nay, snatched you out of hell? Would it be too much for God, who has loved you from all eternity, and will love you for all eternity; for a God who in human form gave up His whole life for your salvation? Ah, if you had a hundred thousand lives, they would not be enough to make a full return for His love! Why, then, do you think that the year is incomplete without the dissipations of Shrove-tide; that is, without a certain season being devoted, according to the perverse custom of the world, to drunkenness, sensuality, and heathenish amusements? Oh, think as much as you will that it is Shrove-tide, but put not away the thought that even then there is a God who must never be offended and must be loved always. Therefore: "Fear the Lord thy God,"[3] at all times.

Every one must always live according to his state.

I come now to our state and profession. It is Shrove-tide, you say; but I suppose you remain a reasoning being at Shrove-tide. You are still a Christian, a Catholic, and make profession of the law, faith, and religion of Jesus Christ. Is not that so? for you certainly do not wish to deny your faith, nor if it were possible, to blot out the baptismal character from your soul. Now, it is an incontestable truth that every one is bound at all times to act as he knows his state and duty require. The words of the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, are: "Every one who makes profession of any state is bound to act as becomes that state."[4] This doctrine is admitted even in the perverse world, which teaches that all should behave in a manner suitable to their birth, station, and occupation. What is fit for a laborer

[1] Qui amat periculum, in illo peribit.—Eccl. iii. 27.
[2] Quoniam, qui talia agunt, regnum Dei non consequentur.—Galat. v. 21.
[3] Time Dominum Deum tuum.—Levit. xix. 32.
[4] Quicunque profitetur statum aliquem tenetur ad ea, quæ illi statui conveniunt.

is not fit for a gentleman. What would we think of a gentleman who would mix with the common people and go about from one tavern to the other? The world would condemn him and say: He is enjoying himself, certainly, but in an unbecoming manner. If I, my dear brethren, were to throw off my clerical dress, and disguising myself, were to rush out to-day into the town, mix with all sorts of people, fill the streets with my shouts and cries, and spend the night in dancing, what man, even if he were the most dissipated, would not be horrified at seeing me? What a shame, people would cry; what a scandal in a Christian town! The man must be mad! But, I would say, it is Shrove-tide for me, as well as for you! I am a man as well as you, and must enjoy myself; I am as much in need of rest and recreation as you are; I am doing this to restore my strength, so that I may be better able to do my duty afterwards. Am I not right? Fie, the answer would be; is that a recreation for a priest, who professes to be a companion of Jesus Christ? Is it fit for one who has vowed to tend to perfection according to his Order, or for a preacher who must exhort others to lead holy lives? Can you not amuse yourself without giving public scandal? If you want amusements of this kind, you should have remained in the world; you must not forget your state of life when you seek recreation. And the answer would be quite right, my dear brethren; I would not have a word to say to it, and would feel thoroughly ashamed; nor would I be worthy of wearing any longer this beloved black cassock, which I would not change for the royal or imperial purple. God preserve me from such folly!

The dignity and duty of a Christian remain unaltered at Shrove-tide.

Now, I ask you again, is Christianity an empty imagination? Is that protestation that we have made in baptism to renounce the devil, the flesh, and the world, with its vain practices, a mere fable? Is the name of Jesus Christ that we bear, of which we boast, and which has cost our Saviour so much blood, such a vile and worthless name that we can easily give it up for anything that flatters our senses? Can there be any time in the year at which it is permitted to act in a manner unbecoming this name, and to dishonor the dignity of our state? What is a Christian, my dear brethren? He is one who has a special relationship to God, his heavenly Father; what Jesus Christ is by nature, the Christian is by adoption; he receives by baptismal regeneration what the divine Word received by birth. The Apostle St. Paul says: "You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby

we cry: Abba (Father)."[1] St. John says: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God."[2] What is a Christian? He is one who is most closely connected with Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, whose member he is. All Christians, says the Apostle, constitute but one body, whose head is Christ, and they are united to Him as members by baptism. "Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member,"[3] united so closely that Christ and we have the same life, as He says to His Father: "I in them, and Thou in me."[4]

What is a Christian? He is one who belongs to God the Holy Ghost, whose dwelling-place he is. "Know you not," says St. Paul, "that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"[5] Can any greater dignity be imagined, my dear brethren, than to be a child of God, a brother of Jesus Christ, and the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost? St. Louis looked upon it as a far greater honor to bear the name of Christian, than to be king of France. St. Leo says: "Oh, Christian," no matter how poor and lowly thou otherwise art, "acknowledge the greatness of thy dignity in being made a partaker of the divine nature, and do not, by an unworthy life, return to thy former vileness!"[6] What is the profession and duty of a Christian? His name of child of God shows clearly enough what reverence and love he ought to have for his heavenly Father at all times and in all places. Hear what St. Peter says: "And if you invoke Him as Father, . . . converse in fear during the time of your sojourning here."[7] If he is a member of Christ, he must represent in his own person the life of his humble, thorn-crowned Head. If he is a temple of God, he must keep himself in purity and holiness as a vessel consecrated to God: "For the temple of God is holy; which you are."[8]

With which the ordinary amusements of Shrove-

See, then, if you can reconcile the holiness and nobility of your state with the vanities and dissipations of the world, the promises you made in baptism and the duties of your holy state with the

[1] Accepistis spiritum adoptionis filiorum, in quo clamamus: Abba, (Pater).—Rom. viii. 15.

[2] Videte, qualem charitatem dedit nobis Pater, ut filii Dei nominemur et simus.—I. John iii. 1.

[3] Vos autem estis corpus Christi, et membra de membro.—I. Cor. xii. 27.

[4] Ego in eis, et tu in me.—John xvii. 23.

[5] Nescitis, quia templum Dei estis, et Spiritus Dei habitat in vobis?—I. Cor. iii. 16.

[6] Agnosce, O Christiane, dignitatem tuam, et divinæ factus consors naturæ noli in pristinam vilitatem degeneri conversatione redire!

[7] Si patrem invocatis eum . . . . in timore incolatus vestri tempore conversamini.—I. Pet. i. 17.

[8] Templum enim Dei sanctum est, quod estis vos.—I. Cor. iii. 17.

many sins and follies that are generally committed at this season. If the season cannot make it lawful for me, a priest, even in the eyes of the world, to have recourse to worldly pleasures and amusements, because they are unbecoming my state, neither can it justify a Christian in the sight of God in indulging in pleasures that are contrary to the dignity and sanctity of his state. Oh, certainly not; do what you can to excuse yourselves, bring forward as many pretexts as you like, "the very religion that you profess condemns your faults!"[1] If a heathen who knew a little of the history of the Church were to come into one of our Christian towns and see how people act during this season, what a strange opinion he would be obliged to form of us! Is this, he might say, that celebrated Christian religion which adores a poor, humble, and crucified God, and exhorts all men to imitate Him? Is this the religion which forbids sin, even in desire and secret thought; the religion which points out to its followers the rough and narrow way of penance and the cross, and tells them to follow it if they wish to go to Heaven? In former times your ancestors upbraided ours for holding public festivals in honor of Bacchus, and proved therefrom the wickedness of our idolatry; while they themselves, by their modest, humble, chaste, and temperate lives, showed so clearly that the Christian religion was true, that they made more converts than all our tyrants with their persecutions could make perverts. But now I can hardly see any difference between what you do now and the pleasures we used to indulge in formerly. Either the old Christian religion is changed, or your ancestors were hypocrites and had no right to accuse ours of impiety. But, I would say to him, wait a little; the day after to-morrow, when Lent begins, you will see a great change in our conduct, for then we will strew ashes on our heads, pray, visit the churches, and lay aside all outward signs of revelry. What, the heathen would answer, is your religion like a coat, that you can take off to-day and put on to-morrow? Is your religion a mere system of trickery that sometimes approves of vices and sometimes condemns them? That at one time prescribes purity and temperance, and at another requires drunkenness, impurity, and dissipation? A religion of that kind contradicts itself, and cannot be true. What do you think, my dear brethren, could we make any answer to this reproach? We might say, perhaps: Oh, it is Shrove-tide; we are only amusing ourselves in order to serve God all the better afterwards.

tide are not consistent.

[1] Ipsa erroris vestros religio, quam profitenium, accusat!

But he could reply: Are amusements of this kind fit for a Christian? If you wish to enjoy yourselves, you should do it in a manner becoming your holy state and the teaching of your faith, that is, with decency and modesty. And to this I could have even less to say than to the first reproach. No season can make me cease to be a Christian; no time can dispense me from leading the Christian, that is, the holy and God-fearing life that I am bound to lead.

The soul remains the same, and must be always cared for.

Finally, it is Shrove-tide. But have we not a soul during Shrove-tide, to save which is our only business? We have an immortal soul, and if it suffers injury, what good would it do us to have had all the pleasures of the world during Shrove-tide? We have also an implacable enemy, who is always lying in wait for us, and who spies out every moment for a chance of ruining us. Perhaps the devil is asleep during Shrove-tide? Or he is weaker and not so well able to tempt us, or else is our nature stronger and better able to resist him, when we leave every door and window open to him, than at other times, when we often have enough to do, even in church and during prayer, to resist him? We have also death to fear during Shrove-tide; an uncertain death that may happen at this time as well as at any other; a terrible death, that will at once launch us into a long eternity. Are we now, perchance, better protected against the countless unforeseen accidents that may cut short the thread of life at any moment? Are we better prepared to make the long journey into eternity, if our time should come when we are in the midst of sinful indulgence? We have also God's judgments to expect, and He will demand a strict account of every idle word, nay, even our good deeds will be scrutinized. Will nothing of what we do during Shrove-tide appear in that judgment? We have a Heaven to hope for, and a hell to avoid. Is that fire extinguished in which sinners are to burn, or will it ever be extinguished? Is that kingdom destroyed in which the just are to reign, or is it worth so little now that we need not trouble ourselves about it? If we gain Heaven during Shrove-tide, shall we be less happy, than if we gained it at another time? If we go to hell during Shrove-tide, shall we be less miserable and unhappy than at another time? Are we now better protected against the anger of God? Who, I ask again, has conferred such an extraordinary privilege on this season? Therefore, the false idea that more is allowed at Shrove-tide than at other times, can be entertained only by those who have no proper faith

in God, no particle of true religion, and no real love for their souls and their eternal salvation.

The approach of Lent does not render such pleasures necessary.

But, they say, that is too severe altogether! Must we always remain at home and give way to melancholy? Lent is coming on; we must enjoy ourselves now; if something occasionally slips in that is not all right we can make it good during Lent; in a few days more we shall have time enough to atone for it all. But what a wretched excuse that is! Because we must watch over ourselves a little more carefully and restrain our senses in a few days, ought we, therefore, now to allow ourselves every liberty? We shall soon weep for our sins: must we now collect material for our tears, and do something that we can afterwards atone for? The Catholic Church will soon forbid us the use of flesh-meat; ought we, therefore, now to indulge in carnal pleasures? Bye-and-bye we shall be exhorted to self-denial: must we, therefore, now drown our reason in drunken excess? Penance shall then be preached to us; let us now act so as to leave something to repent of. We must go to confession at Easter; let us now do something that will give us matter for confession. We must return thanks to God; behold, O Lord, Thou hast commanded us to observe a forty-days' fast; we will obey Thee, but we will have some satisfaction for our obedience by doing beforehand what is pleasing to ourselves, whether it pleases Thee, or not. What wicked talk that is! We *must* enjoy ourselves! Why *must?* What necessity is there for it? Oh, Lent is coming on. But is Lent, then, so terrible? You seem to think that it is like going into another world, where you will never see each other again! What is your idea of Lent? Do you intend to leave the world and bury yourselves in a monastery, or hide away in a cave in the desert? Will you have to suffer hunger and thirst, and to macerate your bodies by vigils and disciplines? I do not think that the spirit of penance will lead you so far. Perhaps the ashes that will be placed on your foreheads the day after to-morrow, require that you should now enjoy yourselves, as a necessary preparation? No; you say. And what then? Oh, we must fast, unless we have a dispensation, and abstain from the use of flesh-meat. Poor people, how I pity you! It is a wonder that you are still alive! Yet there are many who would be overjoyed to have on Easter Sunday the food that others have during Lent, although it is not flesh-meat. Ah, my dear brethren, how many there are who have not always bread enough to eat! They must abstain every day; their fast

lasts through the year; they can never amuse themselves, and yet God keeps them in health and strength. But we must amuse ourselves; we cannot do without it! What folly to imagine that! We have reason to do penance our whole lives long; we must work out our salvation in fear and trembling; as long as the present time lasts, we are not sure of Heaven. It is not those who now laugh whom Christ calls blessed, but those who now weep.[1] And we have cause enough for weeping every hour and moment; our past sins, even if we had committed only one, the constant danger of sin, the uncertainty of dying a happy death and going to Heaven and escaping the pains of hell, all these things should excite us to constant watchfulness, and to childlike fear, humility, and modesty.

We can and ought to rejoice in God.

Yet, lest I should be too strict in this matter (for I know well that they are blessed who weep and mourn, that we are sometimes allowed to laugh, that there are innocent recreations, and that at times when we are free from cares and labors, we may, nay even, now and then, must amuse ourselves), you, too, should amuse yourselves at Shrove-tide, but in a lawful and Christian manner; for if everything that all Christians do were Christian, there would be no bad Christians on earth. Amuse yourselves, then, but with a good and holy intention for the honor and glory of God, the Lord of Heaven. Examine for a moment all the amusements of Shrove-tide, and place the good intention before them, to see how they will harmonize with it. For instance, I will drink to excess, for the honor and glory of God: I will enjoy myself this evening with this or that person in an unlawful manner, for the honor and glory of God; I will spend the night dancing, disguised, and dressed immodestly, for the glory of God and in union with the bitter passion and death of Jesus Christ, that God may be more pleased with what I do, and may be more honored by it. What would you think of that? Is it consistent? Is it not rather making a mockery of God? Enjoy yourselves, but like children of God, who keep their Father always before their eyes and in their hearts; enjoy yourselves, but without sin, without danger to your souls. I have spoken up to this, merely against sinful and dangerous amusements, which are just as unlawful now, as at any other time, and which are not permitted to any one, no matter who he is.

Sinful and dangerous amusements

Do you know, my dear brethren, what my hope is now? I hope and desire that I am preaching to-day without cause, and

[1] Beati, qui nunc fletis!

that what I say cannot be applied to any one in this whole city. To tell the truth, I have just reason for this hope; for I can easily imagine that in the present troublous times, when the whole land is suffering, and so many poor people are bewailing their misery, when we ourselves must acknowledge that we feel the rod, and do not know how much longer we may have to feel it, when God is chastising us with the intention of bringing us to humble and heartfelt sorrow for our past sins, which sorrow alone can appease His anger; in such circumstances, when we have not the least excuse for indulging in dissipation, it is, I repeat, easy for me to imagine that no inhabitant of this city can be so unchristian, so foolish, as to take part in the ordinary dissipations of this season. No, I cannot believe that they who can boast of being born and bred in a holy city are guilty of such extravagant conduct. And if there are young people who, through forgetfulness, seek unlawful pleasures, I cannot imagine that there are parents in this city who allow such license to their children in these hard times. Certainly, if any one asserted the contrary, I should tell him that it is not, and cannot be true. Yet, it actually happens! What, in this city? Yes, in this very city! Away with you, I do not believe you! You must not tarnish the fair fame of this city in that way, nor make strangers look upon us all as fools and idiots, who think they are not sufficiently punished already, and who try to provoke God to chastise this unhappy city and country still more severely. No; I cannot believe you! But it might still be urged against me, it is true, nevertheless, that some young people flaunt about the streets and steal out of the house at night, that their parents connive at them, nay, even persuade them to do so, that mothers go to balls and entertainments with their daughters, and that even foreigners are surprised to find so much levity and dissipation amongst us! Oh, nonsense; I cannot listen to you any longer! Yet, I know that there was an apostate even amongst the Apostles of Jesus Christ, and therefore there may be some amongst us, though not in this congregation here present, who require a word of warning; but still I am quite of the opinion that there are only a few such, and that they have been dragged, as it were, against their will, to share in unlawful amusements, by foreigners with whom they are brought into daily contact.

are ill suited to present circumstances.

I turn then to you, beloved, pious, and Christian brethren who are here present, and I ask you in the words of our Lord, which He addressed to His Apostles, after many had abandoned Him:

Exhortation to the pious to remain faithful to God.

"Will you also go away?"[1] My beloved disciples, you alone are with me, all the others have left me; will you follow their bad example and leave me also? My dear Christians, I ask you the same question; will you join the impious rabble, who during this season offend God by unlawful pleasures, or will you not rather remain faithful to God like the twelve Apostles, like all good and pious Christians? Oh, certainly! True friendship shows itself at all times, and especially when the beloved one is abandoned and in distress. Such are the words that God spoke to the Israelites by the Prophet Baruch: "You shall see in Babylon gods of gold, and of silver, and of stone, and of wood, borne upon shoulders, causing fear to the Gentiles; beware, therefore, that you imitate not the doings of others. . . But when you see the multitude behind and before adoring them, say you in your hearts: Thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord."[2] In the same way, dear Christians, if during this season you see a crowd of people feasting in honor of Bacchus, say in your hearts: Thou alone, O Lord, art our God, whom alone we must adore, fear, honor, and love! What a joy it will be for the angels if you try to atone in some degree, by worthy confession and communion, by frequently visiting the Blessed Sacrament when it is exposed, by fervent prayer and by pious lives, for the insults that so many offer to their Creator during this time! You would be like Tobias, of whom the Scripture says: "When all went to the golden calves, . . . he alone fled the company of all, and went to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord, and there adored the Lord God of Israel."[3]

Resolution to be always faithful.

We shall remain true to Thee, then, O Lord our God, at all times, even if the whole world were to abandon Thee! We shall show that we are true Christians, that we are Thy loving children, imitators and brethren of Jesus Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, worthy descendants of our pious forefathers, who gave up their property and their lives for Thy honor and in defence of the Christian religion! Far be it from us to do anything unworthy of our dignity, or contrary to Thy holy law! We shall enjoy the pleasures that Thou permittest to us, for Thy honor and glory, and in such a way that we shall have nothing additional to repent of and atone for during Lent! Strengthen our resolution by Thy powerful grace, and be merciful, O God of infinite goodness, to those who offend Thee! Amen.

[1] Numquid et vos vultis abire?—John vi. 68.

[2] . . . Visa itaque turba de retro et ab ante adorantes, dicite in cordibus vestris: Te oportet adorari, Domine.—Baruch vi. 3-5.

[3] Cum irent omnes ad vitulos aureos. . . hic solus fugiebat consortia omnium, et pergebat in Jerusalem ad templum Domini, et ibi adorabat Dominum Deum Israel.—Tob. i. 5, 6.

SEVENTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON MORNING PRAYER.

Subject.

The morning is the best and most suitable time for prayer, and that which is most pleasing to God; therefore, this time should be devoted to prayer and to the honor of God, in preference to all other occupations.—*Preached on the fifth Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Petite, et accipietis.—John xvi. 24.
"Ask, and you shall receive."

Introduction.

That is the best and surest means of finding comfort, alleviation, and help in all necessities and troubles of soul and body; namely, prayer to God. We are assured of this in to-day's Gospel by Jesus Christ Himself: "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it to you."[1] Therefore, my dear brethren, let us pray; let each one of us make known his wants and necessities to God! I have often spoken, in different sermons, of the power and unfailing efficacy of prayer, of the way in which to pray, and of the many faults we may commit in prayer. The Gospel of to-day gives an opportunity I have been long seeking, that of speaking of the time for prayer. But is there a special time, then, for it? Does not the Apostle tell us to pray always without ceasing? That is true; still, there is a time for prayer which is better, more profitable, more pleasing to God, and more necessary than any other time, and that is in the morning when we get up; as I shall now proceed to show.

Plan of Discourse.

The morning is the best and most suitable time for prayer, and that which is most pleasing to God; therefore, this time should be

[1] Amen, amen dico vobis: Si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis.—John xvi. 23.

devoted to prayer and to the honor of God, in preference to all other occupations. Such is the whole subject.

Oh, holy angels guardian, encourage us to do this every morning; and that we may never forget it, do Thou help us, O Blessed Saviour, through the intercession of Thy Mother Mary!

The early morning belongs in justice to God.

The most honored guest is shown to the best place at table; he is the first to be served with every dish, although what he gets may not be better than what is given to the other guests; such is the general custom amongst decent people in the world. Etiquette requires that the first of everything should be given to the most honored, because it is the first, and if that rule were neglected, the guest would look upon himself as insulted. Well-reared children, when they get up in the morning, make a point of greeting their parents before any one else in the house, and it would be a sign of great rudeness in a child to pass by its father or mother, in order to greet any one of the servants. You know, my dear brethren, what I mean. The first part of every day is the early morning; the first greeting belongs to Him who has the right to our first thought as soon as we awake; and to whom does this first part of the day belong, if not to God, our Supreme Lord and Master? Whom should we greet first of all, if not our heavenly Father? All that we are, all that we have, all that we can do is a gift of God, and should belong to Him alone.

The end of our creation.

The only end for which we are on this earth is to know God, to love Him, to adore Him, and to praise Him, that we may possess Him in eternity; therefore, all our thoughts, words, and actions, and all the movements of our souls and bodies should tend to this one end, and our whole lives should be a constant adoration and praise of God; not a moment of the day should pass, without being devoted to His honor and glory by a good intention. That is what the Apostle and Christ Himself so often impress on all men: "We ought always to pray, and not to faint,"[1] nor cease praising God. But, since we cannot always keep our thoughts fixed on God during the whole day, and according to divine decree must attend to the temporal duties of our state, it is only right and just that we should present at least the best part of the day to God, and give it completely to Him by returning due thanks to Him, and offering up to Him all the other actions of the day.

The law of nature.

Even blind heathens have learned from the light of nature,

[1] Oportet semper orare, et non deficere.—Luke xviii. 1.

that all our acts should commence with a religious motive. Virgil said: "We must begin with Jupiter."[1] Cicero, too, used to teach the Romans: "All our actions should begin with Jupiter and the other immortal gods."[2] What a shame for a Christian who is illumined by the light of faith, and who adores the one true God present in all places, to be surpassed in this point by heathens and idolaters, and not to give even the beginning of the day to the true God whom he adores! It is a fault that even unreasonable creatures do not commit; the mother-of-pearl opens its shell in the early morning towards Heaven to receive the dew; the flowers of the field turn towards the sun as soon as it appears above the horizon, as if to greet and welcome it; all the birds of the air begin to sing and chirp in the morning, as if obeying a natural instinct that tells them to bless and praise their Creator, to thank Him for having given them life, and to look to Him for their support. Hence King David invites them to praise God: All ye birds of Heaven bless the Lord.[3] Such is also the opinion of St. Ambrose, who says: "The birds sing their sweet notes from the rising to the setting of the sun, so as not to forget the gratitude that all creatures owe their Creator."[4] St. Bonaventure tells us that the Seraphic St. Francis, whenever he heard the birds sing in the morning, used to say: "Our sisters the birds are praising their Creator."[5] John of God, when visiting the hospitals in the early morning, used always to say by way of salutation: "Brethren, let us return thanks to God, since even the birds fulfil that duty."[6] St. Gregory remarks that the cock which crows very loud during the night, makes less noise when crowing in the early morning. This, he says, I take to mean that the cock wishes to awaken men, and when they are awake, to invite them to praise God.

The exhortation of the holy Fathers.

Thus we can go to school to irrational creatures and learn from them when and how we are to treat with God. Why, then, should we require so many exhortations of the holy Fathers to induce us to pray to God in the early morning? Hear what St. Basil says: "A certain time, and that in the morning, should be appointed for prayer, that the first movements of our soul and

[1] Ab Jove principium.—Eclog. 3.

[2] Ab Jove et cæteris diis immortalibus sunt nobis agendi capienda primordia.

[3] Benedicite, omnes volucres cœli Domino.

[4] Nocturnas aves canoro carmine occasum diei solere prosequi, ne immunes abeant gratiarum actione, quibus Creatorem suum omnis creatura collandat.

[5] Sorores aves laudant Creatorem suam.

[6] Fratres, gratias agamus Deo nostro, quando jam aves hoc gratiarum officium illi persolvunt.—A. Castro, In Vit. Joan. Dei.

mind may be consecrated to God. Nor should we allow any other care to enter our minds before we have delighted our souls with the thought of God. Nor should we undertake any bodily labor before doing what the Psalmist says: I will pray to Thee, O Lord; in the morning Thou wilt hear my voice; in the morning I will be present with Thee."[1] St. Jerome, writing to Demetrias, a pious Roman matron, says, amongst other things: "Although you should devote your whole life to the service of God, yet you must select a special time during the day, at which you must give yourself, heart and soul, to God in prayer; the best time for this is the morning, because it is that part of the day which is most acceptable to God."[2] St. Ambrose, speaking of the words of the Psalmist: "My eyes to Thee have prevented the morning; that I might meditate on Thy words."[3] says: "Know you not, oh, man, that you owe the first sound of your voice and the first movement of your heart to God?"[4] He expects that from you not only as due to His Supreme Majesty, but also as a duty that He specially requires of us.

The command of God in the Old Law.

In the Old Law He gave His people a special command with regard to this duty; these are the words of God Himself, by which He shows us that He is not satisfied with any time, but with the particular time that He selects Himself: On the first day of the month you shall offer a holocaust to the Lord: "two lambs of a year old without blemish every day; one you shall offer in the morning, and the other in the evening."[5] What time of the day was the sacrifice to be made? It is fixed clearly enough: "One you shall offer in the morning, and the other in the evening."[6] Amongst all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, the best was the burnt offering, and we might therefore easily imagine that it would be pleasing to God, no matter at what hour of the day it was offered; for the lamb was the same, whether it was sacrificed on the first of the month, or on the second, or in the morning, or at any other time of the day. But, although the

[1] Sit autem signatum tempus orationis, ac matutinam quidem, ut primi animi ac mentis nostræ motus consecrentur Deo. Neque ullius rei curæ ante aditum ad nos demus, quam nos in cogitatione de Deo oblectaverimus; neque corpus prius ad functionem muneris alicujus moveamus, quam illud fecerimus, quod dictum est; orabo ad te Domine; mane exaudies vocem meam, mane astabo tibi.

[2] Quamvis omne vitæ tempus divino debeas opere consecrare; optimum est ergo huic operi matutinam deputari tempus.

[3] Prævenerunt oculi mei ad te diluculo, ut meditarer eloquia tua.—Ps. cxviii. 148.

[4] An nescis, O homo! Quod primitias cordis ac vobis quotidie Deo debeas?

[5] In mensium exordiis offertis holocaustum Domino: agnos anniculos immaculatos duos quotidie; unum offertis mane, alterum ad vesperum —Num. xxviii. 3, 4.

[6] Unum offertis mane, alterum ad vesperum.

victim was substantially the same, the Almighty did not value it unless it was offered on the first day of the month and in the first hour of the day, to show that He must have the beginning of all our actions. In other things, too, He reserves the first fruits for Himself: "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and give Him of the first of all thy fruits"[1] of the field, and the firstlings of the lambs of thy flock, and the firstlings of thy cattle, etc. And as He required the first fruits formerly from the Israelites, so He now requires the first fruits of time, that is, the early morning, from the faithful. He says by the Prophet Osee: "They will rise early to me: Come and let us return to the Lord."[2] In the Book of Wisdom we read: "We must prevent the sun to bless Thee, and adore Thee at the dawning of the light."[3] The Prophet Amos says: "Bring in the morning your victims."[4] In the Book of Leviticus: "And the fire on the altar shall always burn, and the priest shall feed it, putting wood on it every day in the morning."[5] These words are thus interpreted by St. Gregory: Our hearts are the altar, the fire is the love of God which He wishes to burn always, every Christian is a priest, the wood is the example of the Saints and the commandments of God; the fire must be renewed daily by renewing our fervor, and that, too, in the morning.

The example of Jesus Christ, and of all pious servants of God.

Still more powerfully does our Lord exhort us to this by His own example; we read in the Gospel of St. Mark: "Rising very early, going out He went into a desert place; and there He prayed."[6] Such, too, has always been the custom of pious servants of God. Moses used to spend the early morning in prayer, before attending to any public business. The Sacred Scripture says of Elcana, Anna, Phenenna, and their whole household: "And they rose in the morning and worshipped before the Lord; and they returned, and came into their house at Ramatha."[7] The holy Pope Clement relates of St. Peter that he used to assemble the faithful early every morning, and spend an hour

[1] Honora Dominum de tua substantia, et de primitiis omnium frugum tuarum.—Prov. iii. 9.

[2] Mane consurgent ad me: Venite, et revertamur ad Dominum.—Osee vi. 1.

[3] Oportet prævenire solem ad benedictionem tuam, et ad ortum lucis te adorare.—Sap. xvi. 28.

[4] Afferte mane victimas vestras.—Amos iv. 4.

[5] Ignis autem in altari semper ardebit, quem nutriet sacerdos, subjiciens ligna mane per singulos dies.—Levit. vi. 12.

[6] Diluculo valde surgens, egressus abiit in desertum locum, ibique orabat.—Mark i. 35.

[7] Surrexerunt mane et adoraverunt coram Domino; reversique sunt, et venerunt in domum suam Ramatha.—I. Kings i. 19.

with them in prayer and praising God. That pious custom was observed afterwards so strictly by the primitive Christians, that Pliny writes to the Emperor Trajan: No matter how closely I examine the lives of these Christians, I cannot find anything wrong in them. And he adds: "They hold their meetings before the rising sun, and sing hymns to Christ and God."[1]

The desire of the Catholic Church.

How our Mother, the holy Catholic Church, endeavors to encourage us her children to this practice! All the hymns that priests recite in the divine Office are full of invitations of this kind: "Now that the day has dawned, let us adore God and pray to Him."[2] "Away with sleep; let us rise quickly and seek God in the night, as the Prophet says."[3] "Come, Holy Ghost, and enlighten our senses with Thy light, that our first words may be spoken to Thee, and our mouths may be opened in Thy praise."[4] "To Thee, O God, our voices shall first sing, that all our works may begin with Thee."[5] And many more of the same kind; all loving efforts that the Catholic Church makes to exhort and encourage her children to consecrate the first part of the day to prayer and the praises of God. So that, my dear Christians, we must acknowledge and confess that according to the law of justice, to the end of our creation, to the very instinct of nature itself, to the command and will of God, to the example of Jesus Christ and of all true servants of God, to the exhortations of the holy Fathers and to the invitation of our Mother, the holy Catholic Church, we are bound to spend the best and most excellent part of the day, the early morning, in praising God, who is infinitely worthy of all praise and honor.

Therefore, they act wrongly who omit or put off morning prayer.

And now I can leave it to yourselves to say how unjustly, how unworthily of Christians, how discourteously and rudely they act towards God, who, after their night's rest, which they do not take merely to satisfy the wants of nature and to recruit their bodily strength, but to gratify their sensuality and indolence, awake without thinking of God, get up without making the sign of the cross, and begin the day, or rather the fore-noon, since the sun drives them out of bed, without prayer, without bending the knee to God, without offering to Him all their ac-

[1] Antelucanos agunt cœtus ad canendum Christo et Deo.—Plin. Ep. 70. ad Traj.

[2] Jam lucis orto sidere, Deum precemur supplices.

[3] Pulsis procul torporibus surgamus omnes ocius, et nocte quæramus Deum, propheta sicut præcipit.

[4] Tu lux refulge sensibus, te nostra vox primum sonet, et ora solvamus tibi.

[5] Te lingua primum concinat, ut actuum sequentium, tu sancte sis exordium.

tions with the good intention, or else fritter away the whole morning in dressing. How unjustly the Almighty God is treated by those who spend the whole morning in bed and when they are awake, feed their imaginations with all sorts of idle fancies, and have their tea or coffee, or their pipe of tobacco brought to them in bed, or else huddle on their clothes carelessly and go at once to breakfast! Of such people it may well be said: "Whose God is their belly;"[1] for they serve it before they serve God. I will say nothing of those wicked people whose first thoughts on awaking are about impure pleasures and desires, and who thus consecrate the first part of the day to the foul demon of lust. Finally, how unjustly God is treated by those who barely make the sign of the cross and then devote themselves at once to temporal cares, to their ordinary domestic duties, and to conversation and greetings; but their duty to God, their prayers and the holy Mass (if they hear one on week days) they put off to the last moment!

Unavailing excuses on account of domestic duties.

Yes, some will say, if we were in a convent and had only ourselves to look after, we might observe an exact order of the day, and spend the early morning in prayer alone; but we people in the world cannot do that. Things are very different in a household; when we get up we must look after the house, and allot their different tasks to the servants, or else everything will be topsy-turvy. I believe all that easily enough; but what then? Could you not manage to do that the evening before? If the master or mistress sleeps till late in the day, as sometimes happens, who, then, tells the servants what to do? And yet everything goes on all right. Why should the contrary be the case when the time that otherwise would be spent in bed, is devoted to God by prayer and hearing holy Mass? Ah, if you had a spark of divine charity in your hearts, you would feel that the early morning belongs by right to God, and that He expects it; you would know how to manage your households, and at the same time to attend to the service of God! Suppose, for instance, that you had guests to entertain, a law-suit to carry on, or a great profit to make, you would be careful to arrange everything the evening before, so that no time might be lost. And why are you not as careful in matters that concern the honor and glory of God? What great perversity it is, says St. Basil, and how insulting to God, to give the early morning to the service of the world, and not to think of God until later on! If you had a

[1] Quorum Deus venter est.—Philipp. iii. 19.

great man in your house, would you first have your own dinner, and then give what remains to your guest?[1] You would not dream of thus insulting him. How, then, can you dare to devote the first part of the day to your domestic cares, and to give only the remainder to the divine Majesty?[2] How can He submit to be treated so unworthily and unjustly?

On account of ordinary engagements.

As soon as I get up, others say, to excuse themselves from the duty of morning prayer, I have always something to do; people come to see me and do business with me, and decency, as well as Christian charity, require me to attend to them. A pity, indeed, that you should consider it a matter of decency to attend first to the servant, while you keep the master waiting; that is, that you should first transact your business with others, and keep God, the King of Heaven, outside the door of your heart, waiting in vain for the time that He most desires to have from you! Do you get up early every morning, and, like a good Christian, try to observe a regular daily order in your business and in the duties of your state; or must you acknowledge that you are remiss in this point? Perhaps you rise to-day at six, to-morrow you will get up at seven, the day after at eight, until you get accustomed to long sleeping, or else you do not go to bed at a regular hour. Is that the case? If so, and people come to see you in the morning when you are still asleep, what can you do? Oh, you can easily arrange matters then! The servant can excuse you, or can ask the people to come an hour later, because the master or mistress is still in bed. And so you get out of the difficulty. But tell me; would it not be much better and more edifying, and would not those people have less reason still to feel offended, if your servant could say to them with truth: You must excuse my master for half an hour, he is saying his prayers; my mistress is now engaged in her morning devotions; my master and mistress have gone to Church to hear Mass, or to assist at morning prayers. Now, I ask you again, would not that be a much more Christian and edifying excuse? Could any one feel offended at it?

No business should be preferred to prayer.

No; no matter how great and important your worldly occupations may be, they must not take such possession of your heart, as to make you neglect the care of your soul and the duty you owe to God. Christ said to the Scribes and Pharisees: "Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God

[1] Si tu nobilem hospites domi exciperes eine mensæ reliquias apponeres?

[2] Quomodo ergo existimas ex repotiis Deum placare?

the things that are God's."[1] "All things have their season."[2] Give, therefore, to your domestic duties the time they require; but do not on that account refuse to devote the proper time to God. He wishes to have the early morning for Himself, and, therefore, everything else must be set aside in order to give Him that time.

King **David** an **example** of this.

What a number of occupations David had every day! He had to govern his large kingdom with its vast provinces, he was harassed with wars and persecuted by enemies, he was always surrounded by crowds of people who were seeking an audience or awaiting his orders. And yet, how exact and punctual he was in devoting the first hours of the morning to the praises of God! Such is the testimony he gives us of himself: "My eyes to Thee have prevented the morning; that I might meditate on Thy words."[3] And he assures us that it was his continual practice: "O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day."[4] And he promises to continue it: "I will meditate on Thee in the morning."[5]

And our Saviour.

How numerous and holy were the occupations of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Teacher, whose example we must all follow, if we wish to be amongst the elect in Heaven! St. Luke says of Him: "Great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities."[6] He had sinners to convert, and poor and oppressed to help, wherever He went. These were the occupations for which He came down from Heaven, and for the sake of which He often forgot to eat and drink, as He said to His disciples when He was engaged in the conversion of one Samaritan woman: "I have meat to eat which you know not."[7] And yet, as we have seen already, He used to rise early in the morning and go into a solitary place to pray.[8] But, oh, merciful Lord, wilt Thou keep the poor, distressed, and afflicted people waiting for Thee so long? Yes, they must wait, for now is the time at which I must converse with my heavenly Father; now is the time for prayer. He acted thus in order to teach us; for, since He always enjoyed the presence and vision of His Father, He was not in need of prayer.

[1] Reddite ergo quæ sunt Cæsaris, Cæsari, et quæ sunt Dei, Deo.—Matth. xxii. 21.
[2] Omnia tempus habent.—Eccles. iii. 1.
[3] Prævenerunt oculi mei ad te diluculo, ut meditarer eloquia tua.—Ps. cxviii. 148.
[4] Deus, Deus meus, ad te de luce vigilo.—Ibid. lxii. 2.
[5] In matutinis meditabor in te.—Ibid. 7.
[6] Conveniebant turbæ multæ, ut audirent, et curarentur ab infirmitatibus suis.—Luke v. 15
[7] Ego cibum habeo manducare quem vos nescitis.—John iv. 32.
[8] Diluculo valde surgens abibat in desertum locum, ut ibi oraret.

Other pious Christians.

Sidonius Apollinaris, writing of Christian kings, tells us of Theodoric the Goth: "He used to come with a few attendants to the early morning devotions of the priests, and join in them with great fervor."[1] In the Life of the Empress Pulcheria we read that she rose every morning at daybreak, and with her three sisters, her brother, the Emperor Theodosius, and his wife Eudoxia, went to the imperial chapel, where they all sang the Psalms alternately, like priests in choir, and then heard Mass. Their devotions over, the emperor received his ministers, while the imperial princesses went to their usual occupations. Ah, Christians, if all households were regulated in that manner, what great glory would accrue to God, and what plentiful blessings to us!

Conclusion and exhortation to devote the morning to prayer.

Let us, then, be constant in the observance of this Christian practice, or if we have been negligent therein hitherto, let us now begin to make prayer and the praises of God the first business of every day. If anything occurs to prevent us from doing so, and to steal away that time from us, let us act like the angel with the Patriarch Jacob. We read in the Book of Genesis that he spent the whole night with an angel, in whose company he experienced such consolation that he would not let him go away. The angel remained with him till the early morning, but would not consent to stay any longer. He said: "Let me go, for it is break of day."[2] Why could the angel not remain longer on earth; why was he in such haste to depart? He meant, as St. Cyprian says: "It is time for me to sing the praises of God, according to the words: Where wast thou when the morning stars praised me?"[3] We should make the same answer, my dear brethren, in the early morning, if over-indulgence in sleep keeps us too long in bed, or if temporal cares, domestic duties, or conversations and business with others are apt to hinder us from praying and praising God: "Let me go, for it is break of day." Away with sloth! Away with cares and business! This is not the time for such things! "It is time for me to sing the praises of God with the angels!"[4] This is the time that I must give to my God; my angel guardian invites me now to pray, or to go to Church. Oh, what a beautiful thing it is, says St

[1] Antelucanos suorum sacerdotum cœtus minimo comitatu expetebat quotidie, et grande dulitate venerabatur.

[2] Dimitte me, jam enim ascendit aurora.—Gen. xxxii. 26.

[3] Tempus est, ut cantem Dei laudes, secundum illud: Ubi iras cum me laudarent astr atutina?

[4] Tempus est, ut cantem Dei laudes cum angelis!

Basil: "What greater happiness can there be on earth, than to imitate the singing of the angels, to devote the first part of the day to prayer, and to adore our Creator in hymns and canticles?"[1] What greater happiness than to unite our voices with those of our fellow Christians assembled together in the early morning, and to say: All for the honor and glory of God? Certainly we should so act, that, after having praised God on earth like the angels, we may with them praise and bless Him for all eternity. Amen.

The same Introduction will serve for the Feast of the Holy Apostles Philip and James:

Text.

Quodcumque petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, hoc faciam.—John xiv. 13.

"Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do."

SEVENTY-FOURTH SERMON.

ON THE USE AND NATURE OF MORNING PRAYER.

Subject.

1st. The early morning is the best time to pray. 2d. How to pray at that time so as to reap the greatest profit.—*Preached on the sixth Sunday after Easter.*

Text.

Quia ab initio mecum estis.—John xv. 27.

"Because you are with Me from the beginning."

Introduction.

For you, my dear disciples, said our Lord, I have prepared special gifts and consolations of my Holy Spirit that I do not

[1] Ecquid beatius, quam hominem in terra concentum angelorum imitari, ineunte statim die in orationes ire; in hymnes et canticis Creatorem venerari?

give to other men; that Spirit will enlighten you in a special manner, so that you may instruct others, and bear witness to Me; "because you are with Me from the beginning"[1] of my mission. What a beautiful thing it is, my dear brethren, and how pleasing to God, to be with Him from the beginning, to spend the first of the day with Him in prayer, to begin the day by praising Him! as I have proved in my last sermon, when I showed that the best and most suitable time for prayer, and that which is most pleasing to God, is the early morning. Ah, if we only knew what great gifts and graces we could gain from God by morning prayer, we should certainly devote that acceptable time to Him! To encourage us to this I repeat—

Plan of Discourse.

The early morning is the best time to pray, and the most useful for our souls. As I shall show in the first part. How to pray at that time, so as to reap the greatest profit, I shall explain in the second part.

That we may all profit by our knowledge of this truth to pray at the proper time, we beg of Thee, O Jesus, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the holy angels guardian.

Prayer, to be useful, must be attentive and meritorious.

No one can deny that the more attentive and meritorious prayer is, the more salutary and useful it is for our souls. Prayer without merit is like the cries of a beggar, who implores alms the whole day through the streets and yet returns home at night without having received anything. Prayer without attention and full of distractions is a mere wasting of precious time, and does not give praise or honor to God; nay, not only does He refuse to look on it with favor, but He even considers it as an insult deserving of purgatory, provided the distractions come from carelessness, sloth, not watching over the senses, or want of proper preparation, and are voluntarily indulged in.

Prayer is usually more attentive in the morning.

Now, my dear brethren, the early morning is generally the time at which we can pray with the greatest attention and merit. With the greatest attention, because it is the most suitable time for prayer, since the mind is still fresh after sleep, and we are not disturbed by the temporal cares and business that generally disquiet us during the day and cause all kinds of distractions. For we know by experience, and it is a common complaint of people, that they can hardly say an Our Father properly during

[1] Quia ab initio mecum estis.

the day, even in Church, on account of their domestic troubles; once the head is full of worldly cares, it can hardly free itself from distractions. But in the early morning, when most people are still asleep, when the children are quiet and the streets noiseless, the very gloom of the morning and the general silence are great helps to pray with attention. St. Bernard says: "Not without reason does the Prophet say: In the morning I will stand before Thee and will see; because we are then free from external cares."[1] On that account, too, the same Prophet David not only spent the morning in meditation and prayer, but also rose during the night for the same purpose, that he might not be disturbed. He says: "I rose at midnight to give praise to Thee."[2] Hence, so many religious imitate his example, and rise at night to pray and sing psalms. Hear, O Christian soul, says St. John Chrysostom, "the Church of God rises in the middle of the night to pray; rise thou also, O my soul,"[3] and praise God in Heaven. If thou canst not do it at midnight, continues the Saint, "at all events do it in the early morning,"[4] which is the best time for praying attentively and without distractions.

And more meritorious, as it can make all our works meritorious during the day.

And not only that; but it is also the most meritorious time for prayer. The invitation that David gives to all men is: "In the nights lift up your hands to the holy places, and bless ye the Lord."[5] And what will be the effect of doing so? He adds: "May the Lord out of Sion bless thee; He that made Heaven and earth."[6] For the blessing and the grace of God is like the manna that was given every day to the Israelites in the desert, every one could collect as much of it in the early morning as was necessary for his support during the day; but whoever gave way to laziness and slept or spent the morning otherwise than in collecting the manna, had to go without it the whole day, because it melted at once after sunrise. By that the Almighty teaches us that we must pray in the early morning, as He expressly says in the Book of Wisdom: "That which could not be destroyed by fire, being warmed with a little sunbeam, presently melted away; that it might be known to all, that we must prevent the sun to bless Thee, and adore Thee at the dawning of

[1] Non frustra ait Propheta, mane adstabo tibi et videbo; quia tunc a curis exterioribus adhuc sumus jejuni.

[2] Media nocte surgebam ad confitendum tibi.—Ps. cxviii. 62.

[3] Dei Ecclesia mediis consurgit noctibus ad orandum; surge et tu anima!

[4] Saltem sub ipsum diluculum.

[5] In noctibus extollite manus vestras in sancta, et benedicite Dominum.—Ps. cxxxiii. 2.

[6] Benedicat te Dominus ex Sion, qui fecit cœlum et terram.—Ibid. 3.

the light."[1] No doubt God keeps the treasury of His graces always open for us Christians, and He is always ready to bestow them upon us if we only ask for them properly; yet it is in the morning especially that He is prepared to send down a copious rain of graces on those who pray devoutly, so that their souls may be strengthened during the whole day, and all their subsequent works may feel the good influence of their prayer. Hence, they who do not profit by this time, and who allow it to pass without prayer, lose all or a great part of what they might otherwise have gained in merit during the day. This seems to be the meaning of the Wise Man when he says: "Love not sleep, lest poverty oppress thee; open thy eyes, and be filled with bread."[2] In fact, my dear brethren, it is evident enough that all our thoughts, words, and actions, in order to be meritorious of sanctifying grace and of eternal glory, must necessarily proceed from a supernatural intention, that is, from one which directs them to God. Without this intention the holiest works have no merit; with it, when one is in the state of grace, the meanest and most abject works, such as eating, drinking, working, standing, walking, can be raised so high that they reach God Himself and bring us eternal glory in Heaven. And that is a theologically certain truth, as I shall show on another occasion.

So that the neglect of it causes great loss to the soul.

Therefore, I say: You, oh, man, who remain in bed through sheer laziness, till seven, eight, or nine o'clock, without saying, as you ought, your prayers, in which the good intention should have the chief place, or who, when you get up, betake yourself at once to temporal cares, or seek first of all to satisfy your gluttony, and thus put off your prayers till the time of last Mass, if even you hear Mass at all, see what a great loss you suffer. For you squander without profit or merit for your soul all the first hours of the day; all the thoughts, words, and actions, all the different movements of body and soul that might have gained for you a new degree of sanctifying grace and increased your glory in Heaven; all these you have lost forever by your neglect of morning prayer, or by deferring it, and you will never be able to make good the loss. Alas, how much, then, are not they to be pitied, who spend the whole day working for temporal gain without saying a single prayer or once directing their thoughts or in-

[1] Quod ab igne non poterat exterminari, statim ab exiguo radio solis calefactum tabescebat: ut notum omnibus esset, quoniam oportet prævenire solem ad benedictionem tuam, et ad ortum lucis te adorare.—Sap. xvi. 27, 28.

[2] Noli diligere somnum, ne te egestas opprimat: aperi oculos tuos, et saturare panibus.—Prov. xx. 13.

tentions to God! Their souls must suffer hunger and be straitened by poverty, because they do not collect the heavenly manna; they work like the brute beast, and go to bed at night after their day's labor, as poor spiritually as they were when they got up in the morning. But if you devote the early morning to devout prayer, in which you offer up all your actions to God with a good intention, then everything you do during the day will gain for you an eternal reward in Heaven, unless some sinful act or some contrary intention destroys the influence of the good intention, and prevents it from having its due effect.

It is also a powerful means of avoiding sin during the day.

Besides, there is no more powerful means of avoiding grievous sin during the day and of maintaining one's fervor in the divine service, than devout and fervent morning prayer. St. John Chrysostom says: "If we make God our friend in the morning by our prayer, we need fear no enemy."[1] And if an enemy attacks you during the day, and tempts you to sin, "you may laugh at him, because God is your friend."[2] In time of war, the army that first occupies a position and protects itself against all attacks, has already gained a great advantage, while the other that comes later into the field, although it may be more numerous, has many difficulties to contend against, and generally speaking, must lose a great many men before it can dislodge the enemy. It is the same with the spiritual combat that we have to sustain against the enemies of our soul; the advantage is on the side of him who first occupies the field. If my soul keeps the early morning for itself by offering itself to God in fervent prayer, and strengthens its will against sin by a firm resolution, oh, then I have gained a great advantage! If during the day a bad thought or a temptation of the devil comes, if dangerous company or occasions tempt me to sin, the remembrance of the promise I have made to God in the morning, of my good resolution, and of the special graces that God has prepared for those who give Him the best part of the day, will come to my assistance, so that I shall overcome the temptation without great difficulty. But he who misspends the first moment of grace, he who begins the day without God and continues it without prayer, what wonder is it that he should lead a bad life, fall into many sins and die abandoned by God? I have heard many people say: Whenever I omit my morning prayers,

[1] Si in matutinis Deum nobis propitium fecerimus oratione nostra, nihil habebimus inimicum.

[2] Et quod habes, deridebis, propitium habens Deum.

the whole day seems to go wrong with me, everything is a trouble to me. On the other hand, they who begin the day with God by devout and fervent prayer, must acknowledge, from their own experience, that they feel during the day a wonderful courage and zeal in temporal as well as in spiritual things.

It is a mark of a good and pious man.

Besides, the merit of morning prayer is not a little increased by the mortification that one inflicts on his sensuality and love of comfort and pleasures by taking some time from sleep in order to give it to God and to his soul. In one word, what is the sign of a just, pious, and God-fearing man? Is it, perhaps, generosity to the poor, or visiting the sick, or fasting and chastising the body? Certainly all these things are agreeable to God, and very profitable to the soul, if they are performed for a supernatural end; but they are not a convincing sign of piety. And what is, then? The Holy Ghost Himself tell us by the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "The wise man. . . . will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him, and he will pray in the sight of the Most High. He will open his mouth in prayer,"[1] etc. That is the true mark of a man who is really pious and good. And what has he to expect from God? "The Lord will fill him with the spirit of understanding; and he shall direct his counsel and his knowledge, and in his secrets shall he meditate. If he continue, he shall leave a name above a thousand; and if he rest, it shall be to his advantage."[2]

Therefore, the devil tries to prevent or disturb it.

All this is well understood by the crafty tempter, who knows how much the welfare of souls depends on morning prayer, and therefore he uses all his art and power to prevent it. To that end he appoints certain evil spirits, called morning devils, whose sole task is to lie in wait so as to steal away our first thoughts, on awaking, from God, and to fill our minds with all kinds of images, suggesting now one business, now another, until they take away our thoughts completely from morning prayer; if they succeed in doing that, they are sure of the remainder of the day. But if they cannot prevent morning prayer altogether, they try at least to disturb it by laziness, sleepiness, and all kinds of distractions, so that it may be wanting in proper fervor and devotion.

Shown by an example.

Amongst the hermits of old, who used to pray in the early

[1] Justus cor suum tradet ad vigilandum diluculo ad Dominum, qui fecit illum, et in conspectu Altissimi deprecabitur. Aperiet os suum in oratione, etc.—Eccl. xxxix. 6.

[2] Spiritu intelligentiæ replebit illum, et ipse diriget consilium ejus, et disciplinam, et in absconditis suis consolabitur. Si permanserit, nomen derelinquet plus quam mille; et si requieverit, proderit illi.—Ibid. 8, 10, 15.

morning and then occupy themselves in making baskets and in other manual labor, there was a holy man who once saw the devil very busy during the night, preparing all kinds of tools and instruments and placing them in the monks' cells. What are you doing? asked the holy man; what is the meaning of all that? The evil spirit answered: "I am preparing distractions for the monks, that they may occupy themselves in these things, and so become careless of prayer and of praising God."[1] Ah, Christians, let us not be deceived by the morning devil, nor allow him to steal away from us that time so precious for prayer! But what is that prayer? How should we make it so as to derive the greatest profit from it? That we shall see in the

Second Part.

In what morning prayer consists.

The Christian's morning prayer consists in the following acts: First, in humble adoration of God, by which we acknowledge Him to be our Creator and the Sovereign Lord of our lives and of all that belongs to us. Secondly, in returning thanks for the benefits we have hitherto received, and especially for His having preserved us during the night and given us another day to devote to His service—a favor He has not bestowed on many, who either died suddenly during the same night, or fell dangerously ill, or what is worst of all, committed mortal sin. Thirdly, in offering to Him all that we have and all that we are, our bodies and souls, our temporal possessions and wealth, giving all to His holy will, that He may do with us, during the day, whatever He pleases. Fourthly, in the good intention by which we unite all the thoughts, words, actions, trials, and difficulties of the whole day with the merits of Jesus Christ, and offer them up to His honor and glory. Fifthly, in the sincere resolution and determination not to offend God deliberately in any way, but to fulfil His holy will in everything, as well as we know how. Sixthly, in humbly asking the divine help and grace, knowing that, on account of our weakness and misery, we cannot do the least good without it. Finally, in imploring the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of our holy angels guardian, and of our patron Saints. But I need not say much of this matter, because every prayer-book is full of morning prayers of this kind. Would to God that those prayers always came from the heart, and not merely from the lips!

[1] Distractionem fratribus præparo ut his occupati fiant negligentiores ad orandum et glorificandum Deum.

The best of all is public prayer made by many together.

The best and most useful kind of morning prayer, and that which this instruction principally aims at, is public prayer offered up by many who assemble in the Church at the same hour in the early morning, to pray to the great God and to sing His praises. Happy, indeed, is the city of Treves in this particular! How many opportunities have you not of practising this devotion if you wish! At half past four in the morning you can come to the Church of our college, in which, before the congregation prayers commence, you may hear the office sung in the choir, and the invitation to begin to praise the great God of Heaven. And if that hour is too early, or the Church too far away for some, they can have the same devotion in the Church of our Novitiate at half past five. If even this does not suit, there are opportunities enough for public morning prayer in the Church of the Dominican Fathers, in that of the Augustinians, and in that of the Minorites at six o'clock. So that in nearly every part of the city the praises of God are sung in the early morning. This, I say, is the best and most useful kind of morning prayer; it is according to the holy custom of the primitive Christians, who, as I said before, were assembled by St. Peter to pray and sing the praises of God, so that the heathens even wondered at it and were obliged to praise the Christians in the following words: "They assemble in the early morning to sing the praises of Christ their God."[1] It is the prayer that most resembles the office of the holy angels, who with one voice sing the praises of their Creator in the early morning. I must say again with St. Basil: "What greater happiness can man have on this earth, than to imitate the choirs of angels in Heaven, to assemble for prayer at daybreak, and to adore his Creator in hymns and canticles?"[2] This is the prayer of which Jesus Christ, the infallible Truth says to us in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in Heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."[3] But if the assembling of two or three for prayer is so pleasing to God, that He has promised to give them all they ask, what an agreeable sight it must be in the eyes of

[1] Antelucanos agunt cœtus ad canendum Christo et Deo.

[2] Ecquid beatius, quam hominem in terra constitutum, concentum angelorum imitari, ineunte statim die in orationes ire; in hymnis et canticis Creatorem venerari.

[3] Dico vobis, quia si duo ex vobis consenserint super terram, de omni re, quamcunque petierint, fiet illis a Patre meo, qui in cœlis est. Ubi enim sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, ibi sum in medio eorum.—Matth. xviii. 19, 20.

God, and what may not be obtained from Him, when some hundreds of Christians meet in the Church to unite in offering up their prayers and hymns to Him!

The prayer of one alone is not so meritorious or so pleasing to God, as when many pray together.

But there are many who say: I can pray at home, or if I wish, I go to the Church, to pray there alone. Quite true, answers St. John Chrysostom; but you are laboring under a great mistake, however. You can pray at home or in Church: "But you cannot pray at home, or otherwise alone, as well as you can in Church, when many are assembled together for prayer; whence the harmony of many voices ascends to God."[1] Not without reason has Christ told us to say, "Our Father,"[2] not "my Father;" and "give us,"[3] not "give me." For thereby He teaches us that the prayer of many assembled together is most pleasing to His heavenly Father. You can pray alone, but such prayer cannot be so effective as when many pray together, because the number of those who pray makes God more inclined to hear them and to be merciful to them. There is no doubt that when twenty men pull together at a rope, they will move a far greater weight than if they pulled separately, one after the other. Private prayer is like a cannon-ball fired against a wall in order to destroy it; while the prayer of many together storms Heaven, as it were, and takes it by force. Tertullian says of the Christians of his time: "We meet together in order to force our own way to God by our prayers;"[4] we do violence to Him and compel Him to hear us. But, "This violence is pleasing to God."[5] Nay, the angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, does not hesitate to say: "It is impossible for the prayers of many to fail in obtaining what is obtainable."[6] These words should not be forgotten by those people who, though they are present at public morning devotions, yet do not join in singing and praying with the congregation, but read their prayer-books privately and think they have thus more devotion because they consult their own tastes. St. John Chrysostom tells you what a mistake you make: you pray alone, and that is quite right so far; but how careless, distracted, and sleepy your prayers are sometimes, when you do not know what you are praying for, or what you desire from Heaven! How can you expect God to hear prayers of that kind? Whereas, if you

[1] Fieri tamen non potest, ut domi tam bene ores . . . . . ubi clamor felici societate excitatus ad Deum refertur.

[2] Pater noster. [3] Da nobis.

[4] Coimus in cœtum, ut ad Deum quasi manu facta precationibus ambiamus.

[5] Hæc vis Deo grata est.

[6] Multorum preces impossibile est, quod non impetrent illud, quod est impetrabile.

send the same prayer to Heaven in company with many others, it will find its way in, and your want of fervor will be supplied by the fervor of others, so that God will be moved to listen to you; just as in an army, the raw recruits are put along with old, experienced soldiers, so that the inexperience of the former, which would give the enemy an easy victory, is helped by the bravery of the latter, and both together gain the day.

The number of people praying together excites to zeal and fervor.

The fact of a number of people praying and singing together is in itself sufficient to excite the most tepid to fervor, devotion, and earnestness. As far as I am concerned, my dear brethren, I must say that during the first few months after the introduction of the morning devotions into our Church, I could hardly refrain from shedding tears of joy and consolation at seeing so many people singing and praying and crying out together to Heaven. Such is the testimony of a priest of the Society of Jesus who belongs to another Province, and who happened to be in choir, during those devotions; he said afterwards, with tears in his eyes, to a person whom he met: "O Father,"[1] (he spoke in Latin, as he did not know our language), "how beautiful that is! I sat for half an hour listening, and could do nothing but shed tears the whole time. What a heavenly thing it is! We have nothing like that in our country." Praises and thanks be to God, my dear brethren, that He has given us so many opportunities of practising that beautiful devotion! And praise and thanks to Him again that so many devout people, servants, tradesmen, and citizens, are so regular in attending it! I must always think of such people as Christ said to His Apostles of the common people, who believed in Him and were always pressing round Him to hear His words: "Suffer the little children to come to Me; for the kingdom of Heaven is for such."[2]

No excuse for the laziness of those who neglect that devotion.

But, alas, there are many others whom one dare not invite to come so early to public devotions. They find even eight o'clock too early in the winter mornings to come to the sermon; they often lie in bed till the bright rays of the sun drive them out of it; they frequently spend a great part of the night in drinking, gambling, sitting before the door and talking, and how can we find fault with them if they sleep rather long in the morning? Sometimes the dawn of day is not the end, but the beginning of their sleep; not the beginning of their prayer and devotion, but the end of their enjoyment at balls and parties. They thus turn

[1] O Pater!

[2] Sinite parvulos ad me venire; talium est enim regnum cœlorum.—Matth. xix. 14.

the night into day, and, as a matter of course, the day is turned into night, so that when others begin to praise God together, they begin or continue to sleep. How is it possible for them to be present at morning devotions? Yet I do not think that any of those people are now here present. No, the majority of men of good-will may say: I do not act in that way; I go to bed at a regular hour every evening, but I cannot get up early enough for morning devotions; I have tried it a few times, but I was so sleepy during the day that I could hardly attend to my business, on account of breaking my rest so soon. I can quite believe what you say, and am not at all surprised at it. But do you know why it is so with you? You have grown used to long sleeping, and use is second nature. If you were to mortify yourself for a time, and get up earlier for a few weeks or months, you would acquire a good habit, and find that the sleepiness of which you now complain would soon be changed into cheerfulness and gayety. We are what we accustom ourselves to, says the proverb. Many religious of both sexes find it very hard at first to rise at midnight to sing the praises of God, but they get used to it and it comes easy to them. Why? Because they grow used to it. There are many working men who have to labor hard all day and who therefore require more sleep than you, yet they get up every morning at four o'clock to earn a little money, as St. John Chrysostom says; why should you not do as much to earn an eternal treasure in Heaven? I have elsewhere in our Province seen noble lords and ladies present at early morning devotions, and they kept up that habit for many years, even in the depth of winter, and still keep it up; why, then, I must ask, cannot others do the same? Seven hours' sleep ought to be enough for every one; more than that is too much, and is injurious to health.

It is a sign of a defective love of God.

Ah, Christians, I can easily guess the true cause why we sleep so long in the morning. Do you wish to know what it is? "Oh, God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day;"[1] such was the daily cry of King David. What made him so watchful? He says: "For Thee my soul hath thirsted;"[2] the love I have for Thee, O Lord, gives me no rest, and I cannot remain in bed any longer. See, my dear brethren, that is where the fault lies with most of us; we are wanting in that eager love of God, and in true zeal in His service; we cannot say truly, like David: "For Thee my soul hath thirsted;" therefore, too, we cannot say: "O

[1] Deus, Deus meus, ad te de luce vigilo.—Ps. lxii. 2.
[2] Sitivit in te anima mea.—Ibid.

God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day." Oh, what will become of us when the stern Judge will demand an account from us of all the precious hours of our lives that we have squandered in idleness and in unnecessary sleep with the sole view of gratifying our sensuality, while during the same hours others employed their time in singing the praises of God, and thus gained great profit for their souls, which we, too, might have had if we chose? I hope, at all events, that with the help of God's grace, this instruction will induce many who cannot or will not come to public morning devotions, to give, at least, the first part of the day to God, immediately on rising in the morning, by devout and fervent prayer, and to do their utmost, according to the duty that is laid upon them, to send their servants and other members of their household to the public devotions, and not to act as many do, who seem to forbid their servants from going to early devotions, lest they should disturb their masters or mistresses.

Conclusion and exhortation to be constant in attending morning devotions.

But you who have begun that holy custom, continue in it, and as long as you are in good health, do not allow sleepiness or sloth to interfere with it, as some do, who appear at morning devotions whenever they have a fit of zeal, but when the fit is over, forget their love of God and abandon themselves to the delights of sleep. St. Rose of Lima had, with permission of her confessor, fixed a very early hour in the morning to commence her prayer; but since she often mortified her love of sleep by watching whole nights, and so could not sleep in the evening, she sometimes was unable to rise at the appointed hour in the morning; she prayed, therefore, to the Mother of God to awaken her at the proper time, and her prayer was heard. The Blessed Virgin herself used to awaken her every morning, saying: "Arise to pray, my daughter; arise for it is time."[1] Thus she always had the great consolation of seeing the Blessed Mother of God on awakening. Once, after having been awakened in this manner, while she was dressing, she was overcome by sleep and fell back again on her bed; but the Queen of Heaven took her by the hand and said to her: "Awake, my daughter; do not give way to sloth! You have asked me to call you to your usual prayers, and behold, I do so; awake."[2] St. Rose thereupon opened her eyes, but the Blessed Virgin had already disappeared; so that because she gave way to sleep she lost her accustomed consolation. By that the Mother

[1] Surge ad orationem, filia! Surge, nam instat hora.

[2] Surge filia; ne pigriteris! rogasti me; et ecce ad solitas preces te voce; surge!

of God shows us that it is a matter of great importance in the sight of God whether we are careful or negligent in offering to Him the first hour of the day. Let us imagine, then, dear Christians, that we hear from the Blessed Virgin, or from our holy angel guardian, who will not fail to awaken those who ask him to do so, the words: "Arise, it is time for prayer!"[1] Awake, my son, my daughter, the morning devotions are about to begin! Come, my children, and let us unite in praising God! Think often of the words of St. Basil that I have already quoted: "What greater happiness can there be on earth, than to imitate the choirs of angels in Heaven, and to unite with others at daybreak in singing the praises of God."[2] Let us now begin together and continue on earth the duty that we hope and desire to perform in Heaven, namely, with one heart and mouth to praise, love, and bless God! This is the wish that I daily send up to God during the elevation at Holy Mass; Lord, look on Thy people who are here assembled to praise Thee; Thy Son has promised that where two or three are gathered together in His Name, Thou wilt give them all they ask for; give us, then, grace to serve Thee, and to persevere in Thy grace and love, so that we may praise and love Thee forever in our heavenly country. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Feast of St. Bartholomew, Apostle:

Text.

Exiit Jesus in montem orare, et erat pernoctans in oratione Dei.—Luke vi. 12.

"Jesus went out into a mountain to pray, and He passed the whole night in the prayer of God."

From these words we learn first, that Christ went out to pray, and secondly, that He remained the whole night in prayer. By the first, He teaches us poor mortals what we must do amid the dangers to body and soul to which we are exposed, namely, that we must take refuge with God by prayer, for that is the surest means of finding help. By the second, He shows us the best and most profitable time for prayer, namely, the night, or since our duties do not always allow us to pray then, the early morning. I have already proved, my dear brethren, that this is the best time for prayer, as well as the most suitable and the most pleasing to God. Ah, if we only knew, etc.—*continues as before.*

[1] Surge ad orationem! Surge, nam instat hora. [2] Ecquid beatius etc.

SEVENTY-FIFTH SERMON.

ON THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE IN THE EVENING.

Subject.

It is only right for every true Christian to examine his conscience before retiring to rest in the evening.—*Preached on the third Sunday in Advent.*

Text.

Tu quis es?—John i. 19.
"Who art thou?"

Introduction.

Certainly a very necessary question: "Who art thou?" If I only asked myself, if every Christian asked himself that question every day! If I asked myself: "Who art thou?" I must acknowledge that I am a human being, created by God, who always lavishes benefits on me, so that I must admit that I owe Him a debt of unceasing gratitude. If I ask myself: "Who art thou?" A human being, I must answer, who am in the world for no other end but to serve God and to honor and praise Him with all my thoughts, words, and actions, although I am disturbed by many duties and cares which prevent me from seeing whether I really do everything for this one end, and therefore, it is necessary for me to recollect myself occasionally and examine my actions to see if they have strayed away from that end. But if I ask myself after such an examination: "Who art thou?" I will frequently find that in place of loving God, I have fallen into sin, and incurred the danger of being eternally lost, if death were to surprise me. Therefore, I must often repent of my misdeeds, do penance for them, and try to avoid them in future. See, my dear brethren, what salutary thoughts are suggested by that question: "Who art thou?" for it includes all the points that constitute the examination of conscience, that all true Christians should make every day, and especially every evening before retiring to rest. This is what I will show to-day, by explaining that question: "Who art thou?"[1]

[1] Tu quis es?

Plan of Discourse.

It is only right for every true Christian to examine his conscience before retiring to rest in the evening. Such is the whole subject.

That we may all do so, give us, O God, Thy grace, which we ask through the merits of Mary and the holy angels guardian.

The examination of conscience consists, then, as we have seen, in three things principally; first, in heartfelt gratitude for all the benefits we have received from God during the day; secondly, in carefully examining ourselves to see whether we have spent the day well, or ill, according to our last end; thirdly, in exciting ourselves to sorrow and repentance for the sins we have committed, with a firm resolution to live better in future. Now I say, and all must admit who think of the matter attentively, that it is only right for each and every Christian, no matter what his state and condition may be, to observe these three points every day, and not to omit one of them. What is required for the evening examen is perfectly just.

And in the first place, as far as gratitude is concerned, is it not right that we should at least once in the day return thanks, with all our hearts, to that Lord who has overwhelmed us with benefits during the whole day, nay, even during our whole lives? Oh, mortal, "who art thou?" how dost thou live? With the exception of the morning, when, as I have no doubt, you hear Mass like all good Christians, you spend the greater part of the day in sleeping, eating, drinking, talking, working, and in the ordinary domestic duties that are required by your state of life. I admit that if you do all this with a good intention and direct your actions to your last end, while you are in the state of grace, all these actions are holy and meritorious, and if while performing them you frequently raise your heart to God, they become an unceasing prayer. Still, ought you not to give to God, who thinks of you every moment in the day, who preserves you in life and protects you from countless dangers of soul and body, at least a quarter of an hour in the evening, after your day's work, before you retire to rest, to open your heart to Him and thank Him for the benefits He has bestowed on you? If you did not do so you would be guilty of base ingratitude. First, gratitude.

Suppose, says St. Bernard, that you were sick, blind, deaf, dumb, or crippled, and that some one had to-day healed you; with what gratitude would you not think of that man this even Proved by a simile.

ing when you are going to bed for the first time, with your senses perfect and free from bodily ailment! And how can you retire to rest without thanking God, who has given you to-day and always your sight, hearing, speech, your sound limbs, your health, and your life? Nay, if you give a poor beggar even a piece of bread, he will not go away without thanking you; but God has given you your dinner and supper and all that you have; does He deserve no thanks for His goodness? Your servant wishes you good night, and you thank him for doing so, although his wishes cannot give you a night's rest; the good God not only wishes, but gives you rest during the night; you sleep surrounded by His benefits; is it possible that you can go to bed without first thanking Him? If so, you would be more ungrateful than the dog, which fawns upon you before he leaves your room for the night. See there, my dear brethren; if the evening examen were of no use to us, if it were not so necessary to keep us from sin and to preserve us in the friendship of God, if it consisted in nothing but thanking God for the benefits we have received from Him, would it not be only right for every true Christian to practise it constantly? Would it not be an injustice to omit it even once?

Secondly, the examen of conscience is just.

The second point that belongs to this examen, and that properly constitutes it, is the discussion of our conscience and of our actions during the day. If we love our soul and its salvation, we must admit that every one is bound to make this examen daily before retiring to rest. A merchant or man of business who has bought and sold a great deal of merchandise in his shop and at the market during the day, if he is a careful and prudent man, will sit down in the evening and look over his accounts, comparing his receipts with his expenditures, to see whether he has lost or gained by his transactions, whether everything is paid for, whether he owes anything or anything is owing to him, and he writes down everything in its proper place, that he may not forget it, and that he may avoid mistakes in future; he also exacts a similar account from all his clerks. It would be a bad thing for a merchant if people could say of him that he keeps no books, nor accounts, that he is careless in writing things down and has all his affairs in confusion, etc. A man of that kind would not do much business. A gambler who has spent five or six hours in playing cards, especially if the stakes are somewhat high, counts his money when he comes home, and reckons up what he had before he began to play, to see whether he has won

or lost. How much more careful both the merchant and the gambler would be in making up their accounts, if they knew that they could thereby make good all their losses! Oh, mortal, "who art thou?"[1] You are a merchant whom God has sent into this world as to a market, that you may buy eternal goods for yourself; the last end, the great object of your life is God and Heaven; to it must be directed all your thoughts, cares, words, and actions. The hour will come when you shall hear the words: "Give an account of your stewardship,"[2] show what you have gained with the talents intrusted to you. Woe to you, then, if you have not kept a book, if everything is in confusion, if you are short in your account! You are engaged in a continual game; your opponent is the devil, the world, and the flesh; the stake is not a penny, as I have sometimes seen, nor a dollar, nor two dollars, as is the case with those who are too much given to gambling, but your own immortal, precious, and only soul, and the happiness of a whole eternity, which you can win or lose each moment. For God's sake, think how much depends on your winning! Now that game turns out sometimes lucky, sometimes unlucky for men; at one time we win, at another we lose, according as we overcome or yield to temptation to sin. Now, as we have seen before, you are engaged the whole day in your domestic and other duties, and are distracted with all kinds of thoughts and cares, so that you cannot give the proper amount of attention to the business of your salvation; you have seen, heard, thought, spoken, and done a great deal; it may easily happen that you have now and then lost sight of your last end and suffered great loss. Certainly your conscience always does its work; it warns and reproves if we do anything serious against the law of God; but during the day, amid the tumult of temporal affairs, it is like one who tries to speak alongside a rushing torrent; he opens his mouth and says different things, but the noise of the water drowns his words. In the same way the turmoil of temporal affairs prevents us from hearing distinctly the voice of conscience. Besides that, our evil inclinations blind us at the time of temptation, so that we either take no notice of the sin we commit, or else look upon it as trifling; it is only afterwards, when we enter into ourselves and take time to consider the matter attentively, that we find out the deformity and gravity of it. What value did Esau set on his birth-right when he sold it for a mess of pottage? He came home tired and hungry, says the holy Scripture, he saw the warm food which his

[1] Tu quis es? [2] Redde rationem villicationis tuæ.—Luke xvi. 2.

brother Jacob was preparing, and felt such an inclination for it, that he at once gave up his birth-right forever, in return for it: "And so, taking bread and the pottage of lentils, he ate, and drank, and went his way, making little account of having sold his first birth-right."[1] But when his eyes were opened afterwards and he saw the effects of his gluttony and learned that he had lost his father's blessing, "he roared out with a great cry."[2] Ah, my dear brethren, often we sell our right to Heaven for a miserable mess of pottage, for a vile pleasure, or some temporal gain! Yet in the heat of passion we think nothing of our loss, like Esau, until our eyes are opened afterwards and we think more seriously of it. And that is what we should do every day, when we have got rid of the cares of business, and our evil inclinations are stilled. From all this, oh, mortal, you must see that it is right and prudent for you, if you love your soul and its salvation, to examine in the evening the actions of the day, and to take account of the good and the evil, according to the advice of St. Ephrem: "Every day you must dilligently consider how your business has progressed,"[3] and whether your soul has lost or gained during the day.

Even heathens have made that examen.

I will not say much now of St. Basil, St. Bernard, St. John Chrysostom, and other holy Fathers of the Church, lest you should think that the custom is fit only for great Saints; for even heathens, who tried to lead an orderly life, according to the light of reason alone, give Christians a good example in this respect. The philosopher Seneca says: "The mind must be called upon to give an account of itself daily."[4] He says of himself: "I use this power and judge myself every day," in the evening, "when the light has disappeared, and my wife, knowing my custom, keeps silence. I consider how I have spent the whole day; I review all my words and acts; I hide nothing from myself, and pass over nothing, and if I find that I have done wrong, I reprove myself, and say: See that you avoid that in future."[5] Such, too, was the custom of Cato, Sextius, Pythagoras and many other philosophers. Those heathens and idolaters acted thus

[1] Et sic accepto pane et lentis edulio comedit, et bibit, et abiit, parvi pendens, quod primogenita vendidisset.—Gen. xxv. 33, 34.

[2] Irrugiit clamore magno.—Ibid. xxvii. 34.

[3] Diebus singulis vespere diligenter considera, quo pacto sese habeat negotatis tua et mercimonii ratio.

[4] Animus quotidie ad rationem reddendum est vocandus.

[5] Utor potestate et quotidie apud me causam dico, cum sublatum e conspectu lumen est, et conticuit uxor, moris mei jam conscia, totum diem mecum scrutor. facta et dicta mea remetior, nihil mihi ipsi abscondo nihil pertranseo. . . .Vide, ne istud amplius facias.—Seneca. L. 3. *De ira* c. 36.

through love of honor, or to win the praise and esteem of men. They knew nothing of the divine justice, which will exact a strict account of every idle word, and in which even our good actions will be examined to see whether they have been properly performed; they knew nothing of hell or purgatory, nor of the severe temporal and eternal punishments that are inflicted on sin; they knew nothing of the everlasting joys of Heaven, nor of the rich reward that awaits our good works. What would they not have done, if they had had as much light and knowledge as we have? Lipsius says, speaking of Seneca's mode of life: "I am amazed whenever I read this, nor can I ever read it without admiration and confusion,"[1] for it is a wonderful thing that a man who was so much occupied with business and study, who had a wife and children to look after, who lived amid the turmoil of a court as a tutor of the emperor, and who was so rich that his treasures might be called regal, yet was so punctual in examining himself every evening.

How much more should not Christians do the same.

But I am still more surprised, my dear brethren, that many sensible Christians have given themselves up so completely to temporal things, that they cannot spare a quarter of an hour, when their day's work is done, to attend to their souls. Must a benighted heathen, then, rise up on the day of judgment to put such Christians to shame? No, we will not allow such a disgrace to rest upon us; but every evening we will act like the steward of the Gospel, who called all his master's debtors together and asked each of them: "How much dost thou owe my Lord?"[2]

How all in general may make this examen.

So let each one recall to his memory all his thoughts, words, actions, his outward senses, and the duties and obligations of his state, and ask: "How much dost thou owe my Lord?" How have I served Him to-day? When and how did I rise this morning? What were my first thoughts? What did I do afterwards? With whom did I associate? What business did I undertake, and with what intention? What joys or sorrows have I had? Have my pleasures been lawful, have I borne sorrow patiently? You, my eyes, what do you owe my Lord? Have you seen, or wished to see, anything unlawful to-day? You, my ears, what do you owe? Have you, perhaps, heard with pleasure something contrary to purity or charity? And you, my tongue, what do you owe? How much, where, how have

[1] Obstupesco, quoties hæc lego, nec sine admiratione ac rubore unquam legi.

[2] Quantum tu debes Domino meo?—Luke xvi. 5.

you spoken? Have you injured or lessened the good name of another? Have you given way to lying, cursing, swearing, quarrelling, or scandalous talk? You, my hands, what do you owe? Have you sinned to-day by impurity or injustice? You, my feet, what do you owe? Have you brought me into dangerous company, in which the precious time is wasted in dissipation, or in drinking and gambling?

How each one may make it according to his state of life.

In the same way each one may examine himself upon his own particular duties: "How much dost thou owe my Lord,"[1] as father or mother? Have I been careful to train up my children for their last end? Have I kept them away from evil, and led them on to good? Have I punished them when they did wrong? Have I given them good example? How much dost thou owe thy God, as master or mistress? How have I treated my servants? Have I allowed them to do anything against the law of God, or connived at their doing it? Have I given them cause for impatience and trouble by being harsh with them? How much dost thou owe as husband or wife? Have I always acted according to the love and respect that we owe each other? Have I, perhaps, through excessive love, done something against my conscience, or given cause, by ill-temper, for suspicions, jealousy, and sadness? How much dost thou owe as shopkeeper or tradesman? Have I taken advantage of any one to-day in my work or business? Have I done everything with a good intention for God's sake? How much dost thou owe as son or daughter? Have I always shown obedience, respect, and filial love to my parents? How much dost thou owe as servant? Have I done the work required of me with proper diligence, fidelity, and readiness, and considered the advantage of my employer in everything? And so on. Now, if I find that I have managed matters well according to the Christian law and the will of God, I must again thank the good God for having preserved me in preference to many others from many sins during the day, and I must heartily rejoice in the Lord and go quietly to rest. But if I find that I have done wrong, I must blot out my fault at once by sorrow and repentance, and make a firm resolution to avoid it in future. And this last point of the examen is most important and must not by any means be omitted.

Thirdly, sorrow for sin is just.

When one examines his conscience thus every day, he will find often that he has sinned, and sometimes grievously, during the day, and his conscience will answer him as Christ answered

[1] Quantum tu debes Domino meo?

Judas at the last supper. When our Lord said that one was about to betray Him, all the Apostles were in the greatest consternation, and asked Him: "Is it I, Lord?"[1] And when Judas also asked: "Is it I, Rabbi?"[2] Christ answered: "Thou hast said it;"[3] thou art the traitor who wilt deliver Me to my enemies. In the same way, when many a Christian will examine himself in the evening and ask: "Is it I, Lord," who have voluntarily entertained so many impure thoughts and imaginations against Thy holy law? Is it I who in company have uttered so many uncharitable and harsh words against my neighbor? Is it I who have indulged my gluttony by excessive eating and drinking? Is it I who have squandered the time in idleness, gambling and sinful amusements? Ah, my Lord, am I the wicked servant who have to-day sinned grievously against Thy law? Yes, your conscience will answer, in place of God: "Thou hast said it;" thou art the man! And if such is the case, oh, most unhappy mortal, what are you?[4] You are an enemy of God, a slave of the devil, a child of hell. And will you dare to go to sleep without first regaining the friendship of God? Suppose you were to die during the night? And that is nothing new in the world; it has happened to very many men who went to bed at night strong and healthy and were found dead in the morning. St. Paul warns us all: "Let not the sun go down upon your anger."[5] Why? Because you do not know if you will live to see the sun rise again. Does not even Jesus Christ Himself warn you: "Be you, then, also ready, for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come,"[6] and bring you from time into eternity? Can that not be the case with you to-night? If it were so, where would you go, unhappy man? Your body would be found dead in the bed in the morning, but your soul would be in hell! Could you go to sleep peacefully under such circumstances? The Emperor Augustus wondered how a certain Roman noble, who was a hundred thousand crowns in debt, could go to sleep quietly, and after the latter's death, when the creditors had seized upon everything else, the Emperor kept his pillow for himself, thinking that it must contain some wonderful charm, since one so heavily laden with debt could sleep peacefully upon it. Oh, sinner, how many millions do you owe to

[1] Numquid ego sum, Domine?—Matth. xxvi. 22.
[2] Numquid ego sum, Rabbi?—Ibid. 25.
[3] Tu dixisti.—Ibid. [4] Tu quis es?
[5] Sol non occidat super iracundiam vestram.—Ephes. iv. 26.
[6] Et vos estote parati, quia qua hora non putatis, Filius hominis veniet.—Luke xii. 40.

God, when you have even one mortal sin on your conscience? Must we not look upon the pillow on which you sleep as something wonderful?

How dangerous to go to sleep without repentance. Shown by an example.

One of our Missionary Fathers wrote from India, that as he was once on a journey with his companions, they were surprised by the night, and had to sleep in a forest under a tree. Both were very tired and slept soundly; but when they awoke the next morning they found quite close to where they had slept the cave of a fierce tiger, while a huge serpent was coiled round the branches of the tree under which they had lain. You can easily imagine, my dear brethren, how frightened they were at finding themselves in such dangerous company. They stole away from the place as quietly as possible, thanking God heartily that He had saved them by means of their angels guardian from such imminent danger. Now, do you think that if the Fathers had known what a perilous position they were in, they would have slept quietly under the tree? I certainly would not have done so, and I think none of you either. Oh, mortal, who have a grievous sin on your conscience, and go to sleep without repenting of it, what a much more dangerous companion you have, not merely near you, but actually within you; a companion far more dangerous than all the serpents, and dragons, and tigers on earth, and all the spectres and demons of hell! If all these monsters surrounded my bed at night, I should not have so much to fear, as if I had a single mortal sin on my soul; for they could not hurt me, as long as God protects me. If God allowed them, they could kill my body, but they could not harm my soul in the least; while if I am so unfortunate as to die with even one mortal sin on my conscience, both body and soul are lost forever. Sinners, how is it possible for you to sleep calmly in such circumstances? for you have always cause to fear and to think that if you die during the night, you are lost eternally!

We can escape that danger by repentance.

Ah, do not allow that dangerous guest to remain with you any longer! Drive it away at once before you go to bed, by heartfelt sorrow. There is no softer pillow than a good conscience. How calmly and peaceably he sleeps who can say to himself: Now I have squared my accounts with God, and I am quite ready to obey His will; I do not refuse to live, I am not afraid to die; we have a good Master to obey; I give Him my body and soul: I am a friend, a child of God; if I die to-night I shall inherit the kingdom of Heaven; come, then, sleep, and do your office! What a consolation, Christians, to be able to say that with truth!

But we cannot do so, unless we make our evening examen, and repent of our sins.

Shown by examples.

Scaliger writes of a nobleman suspected of conspiracy, who was thrown into prison, and who, through fear of losing his life, became quite gray in one night; but this sudden change was the very means of saving his life, for Francis Gonzaga, against whom the conspiracy was directed, became touched with pity when he saw the state of the unfortunate noble, and set him free.[1] Another young man, through fear of death, was so changed in a single night, that when he was brought the next day to hear his sentence pronounced, the judges did not know him. The emperor, hearing this, was moved with pity, says Lemnius, and pardoned the young man, thinking that he had been sufficiently punished already.[2] Oh, mortal, who offend God by grievous sin, who are you?[3] You are a rebel who conspires against his Supreme Lord; you are a captive of the devil, and the sentence of death must be pronounced upon you. What are you to do? Ah, think of the extreme danger in which you are! Do not go to bed until you have, through fear of death and judgment, changed yourself into another man, by perfect contrition and detestation of your sins; if you do that, you will have made matters all right; God, who before was angry with you, will no longer look upon you as His enemy, but will pardon your sin and receive you again into His grace and friendship. What were the circumstances under which Assuerus held out his sceptre to Esther as a sign of his love and favor? She saw the king looking fierce and angry, and she grew pale with fright and was on the point of fainting away. Assuerus thereupon came down from his throne, supported the fainting queen in his arms, and laid the sceptre on her breast. This, says Richard of St. Victor, is a symbol of a soul standing before the judgment seat of God, and trembling at the recollection of its past sins. "Whom does Assuerus signify here, but God? What does Esther represent, but the soul? Esther was terrified when she looked at the king, and the soul trembles at the sight of the majesty and strict justice of God."[4] Ah, Christians who sin during the day, place

[1] Qui propterea et veniæ et vitæ fecit gratiam.

[2] Cæsar ex vindicta in commiserationem animum deflexit, itaque satis pœnarum dedisse ratus, culpam illi remisit.

[3] Tu quis es?

[4] Quem in hoc loco Assuerus Rex significat, nisi Deum? Quem Esther, nisi animam? Esther intuita regem expavefacta cecidit; et anima Deum, et districta Dei judicia contemplando coram divina majestate contremiscit.—Apoc. L. I. c. 4.

yourselves in the evening as poor criminals before the angry countenance of your Judge, tremble through fear, go down on your knees and repent of your sins, and you will appease your Judge and turn Him into your loving Spouse, who will at once receive you with love and tenderness into His arms. Then, as we have seen already, you may think and say, to your great consolation: Now I am again a child and friend of God: "In peace, in the selfsame, I will sleep and I will rest."[1]

Exhortation to make the evening examen, representing the many advantages to be derived from it.

Besides that, my dear brethren, what a great advantage we can gain from that evening examen! What purity of conscience must not be the result of such a daily custom! The oftener a room is swept out, the cleaner it is; the less the broom is used, the more does dirt accumulate. An old priest, as Pelagius says, used to teach his disciple as follows: The devil is an enemy, your conscience is a house; be careful, then, of the craft of your enemy, who always tries to throw dirt and filth into your house; your duty is to sweep it out, and to cleanse your conscience daily. If you neglect that, your house will soon become full of filth. Therefore, be on your guard, and since your enemy throws in the dirt every day, do you throw it back on him daily, and you will keep your house clean; otherwise, your conscience will become as unclean as a pig-sty and will be stained with all sorts of sins. You know what happens in a ship; the water is always forcing its way in on every side, and there must be some one to pump it out now and then; if he neglects his duty, the ship will soon fill and sink. It is the same with our conscience; daily, almost hourly, sins find their way into it, either in thought, word, or deed; we must, therefore, be careful to get rid of them again. Do that, then, in the evening; pump the water out of the ship; that is, cleanse your conscience from the sins that stain it, lest it become too full of them and be miserably lost. And what a safe-guard it is against future sin, when we make our evening examen with a firm resolution of amendment! What little trouble we have afterwards in confession, when we thus examine our faults and failings and imprint them on our memory! There is no doubt that many confessions are bad on account of sins that are concealed through culpable negligence in examining the conscience, especially in the case of those who seldom go to confession. But if he who always keeps up the holy custom of making his evening examen, afterwards forgets a mortal sin in confession, he can certainly console himself with the assurance that it is through in-

[1] In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam.

culpable forgetfulness, since he knows well that he uses all human diligence in examining his conscience. How does it happen that many who go to confession every month, or every two months, yet do not know what they have to say? They can hardly find a sin to confess; but they would find enough if they examined themselves daily. As it is, they keep no account, they pay no attention to their actions, and live in a state of indifference, although they are always involved in temporal cares; is it any wonder that their sins should escape their memory and be forgotten? We do not know, however, whether the devil will forget those sins, so as not to bring them forward in judgment against those negligent people. I do not say, my dear brethren, that we are bound under pain of sin to make that examen, and therefore we must not be anxious on that account; but think only how reasonable and how advantageous the practice is. Let no one imagine that it is fit only for religious in a convent. I admit that these latter can make it more easily and conveniently on account of their daily order of life; but I am still of the opinion that the evening examen is more necessary for lay-people, because during the day they pay less attention to themselves and to their own thoughts, words, and actions, while they have less time to spend in devotion with recollection. Therefore, Christians, since that examen takes no more than a quarter of an hour, why should we refuse to give that much time to God and to our souls?

According to the example of pious Christians.

There are many Christian families in which master and mistress kneel down every evening with their children and servants, to say the Rosary or the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and to make the examen of conscience, reciting afterwards their usual evening prayers. May God give eternal rest to the souls of my own father and mother, who always took turns with each other in reciting those prayers! If both of them were away, or were otherwise hindered, they ordered me, when I was still a student, to take their place and recite the prayers for the household; an office that I then looked upon as a great honor and pleasure. What joy God and His angels must have in such assemblies, a fact that I then did not understand. What holy families those are; what blessings they receive from God! For in that way the children learn from their youth to fear God and to keep their conscience pure; the servants are encouraged to piety and devotion, and thus father and mother, master and mistress, are helped to fulfil their two principal duties. Thus

the children and servants are kept out of the streets in the evening, and are prevented from spending the summer's evenings sitting at the door till night, laughing and joking, and exposing themselves to the danger of sin; for they certainly do not then say the Rosary or their night prayers, or make the examen of conscience. On the contrary, a great deal of sin is committed in that way, as I know to be the case, and humanly speaking, it would be impossible in such circumstances to avoid sin. Woe to parents who allow such things to take place! Another advantage of the evening examen is, that the children afterwards, when they are settled in life, teach that devotion to their own families, for they remember the custom that was observed at home, and thus piety and the fear of the Lord are transmitted from one generation to another. Holy indeed, I repeat, are such families! If we do not wish to follow this example, my dear brethren, although it were much to be desired that every household did so, at least let each one practise this devotion for himself, and let every master and mistress often exhort their children and servants thereto, confiding in the divine promise, of which St. Paul speaks, that if we judge ourselves, our divine Judge will afterwards be favorable to us: "But if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."[1] Yes, O Lord, such shall be our resolution; we shall begin this very evening, and continue always to judge ourselves by the evening examen. Holy angels guardian, excite all those under your charge to this holy practice. Amen.

Another Introduction for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost:

Text.

Bene omnia fecit.—Mark vii. 37.
"He hath done all things well."

Oh, my good God, would that I could say that with truth of myself: I have done all things well![2] During the whole time that Thou hast preserved me in life, I have done everything well; my thoughts, words, and actions were all good! But, alas, how different will be Thy judgment of me when Thou wilt examine my life and scrutinize all my thoughts, words, and actions! Past years, where are you, what testimony can you

[1] Quod si nosmetipsos dijudicaremus, non utique judicaremur.—I. Cor. xi. 31.
[2] Bene omnia feci!

give when the words will be pronounced: "Behold the man and his works"?[1] You will say: "He hath done all things ill."[2] Almost all the thoughts he had during those years were directed to evil, almost every word he spoke was bad, almost all his acts were wicked and sinful. Alas, what will become of me if I do not now repent of my past sins and transgressions, and amend my life? How many weeks, nay, how many days can I now count up and say of them with truth: Thanks be to God, in that week, on that day, I have done all things well? Alas, the contrary is the case as often as I examine my conscience; nearly always I find something that was not done properly and in accordance with the will of God. My dear brethren, every true Christian ought, in justice, to make that examen frequently; nay, every day, even, especially before going to bed at night. If we do so, we shall find out whether our thoughts, words, and actions are good or evil, and this daily examen is one of the best and surest means of doing all things well, according to the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the fruit that I hope you and I will derive from this sermon, namely, to make our daily examen of conscience. Therefore, I say,—*continues as before.*

SEVENTY-SIXTH SERMON.

ON THE USE OF THE PRESENT TIME.

Subject.

1st. This present day is especially the day of our salvation. 2d. Therefore, each one, according to his state of life, must make a good use of every day.—*Preached on the Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord.*

Text.

Et postquam consummati sunt dies octo.—Luke ii. 21.
"And after eight days were accomplished."

Introduction.

A happy New Year! Such is the wish we hear to-day from every one, in every house, in every street, although no one has it

[1] Ecce homo et opera ejus. [2] Omnia male fecit.

in his power to give away an hour, or a moment, much less a year. We are very generous as far as wishes and promises go; we give away years by wholesale, just as some merchants do, who talk about their wares, when they have hardly a yard of cloth they can call their own. That it may not be the same with me, I will not be too generous with my wishes and promises in disposing of whole years. But I will confine myself to a single day; I will measure my wishes by the space of one day only. Indeed, to tell the truth, I do not set much store by the ordinary New Year's sermons, nor do I think that the devil dreads them any more than if the preacher were to ascend the pulpit and distribute therefrom all sorts of New Year's gifts to the congregation. Besides, the people come to such sermons, generally speaking, out of mere curiosity, so that preachers must lay aside their usual office for that day. Yet, not to depart altogether from the established custom, and at the same time to fulfil in some degree my duty as preacher, which requires me to use the precious time for the spiritual profit and advantage of my hearers, I will try to unite both, as far as I can, with God's help. I therefore confine myself to this, the first day of the New Year, and I wish, with all my heart, that it may be a happy one for you and me, as far as our souls' salvation is concerned. I will show the cause of that wish in the first place, and I say—

Plan of Discourse.

This present day is especially the day of our salvation. The first part. May it be a good day, then, for us all. The wish that I will present to all, according to their different states of life, in the second part. What I say of to-day, in particular, let each one say of every day, and then all our days and years will be spent in a good and salutary manner.

To this end may He give us His grace, who on this day was pleased to be called Jesus, that is, Saviour. We ask it of Him, through the intercession of His Mother, and the holy angels guardian.

Every day is a day of salvation.

But is not every day of the year a day of salvation? Can we not, must we not, work out our salvation every day of our lives, to-morrow, as well as to-day? Certainly, we should do so. Is not God ready to help us to our salvation by His grace every day? Yes, there is no doubt of it, provided we only wish it. And, even supposing that one had lost the days that are past,

and neglected his salvation ; suppose that to-day, also, he is as idle and careless as usual ; can he not make good the loss on any and every day of his future life ? Does not God Himself assure us of that clearly enough by the Prophet Ezechiel : "The wickedness of the wicked shall not hurt him, in what day soever he shall turn from his wickedness" ?[1]

But especially the present day.

That is all quite true, my dear brethren, and still I say that this day is especially a day of salvation. Do you know why ? First, because it is the first day of the New Year, and warns us to work out our salvation with all earnestness, for it reminds us of the vanity and transitoriness of all else on earth, and of the importance of our eternal salvation. It tells us that another year of our lives has passed, and is vanished forever, with all its temporal cares and joys, so that there is nothing lasting, nothing constant in this world but to serve God alone and to heap up treasures for Heaven. We could be reminded of that fact by the first day of every month, or every week, nay, even by every day in the year, for each day might remind us that our lives are shorter by another month, week, or day. However, we do not reckon by months, weeks, and days. No one asks himself : how many months old am I now ? how many weeks have I lived ? much less, how many days have I spent in this life ? It is by years that we measure our age ; we say, whenever a new year begins : Now I am so many years old.

For it teaches us that everything in this world is vanity.

Since this is, then, the first day of the year, it gives us occasion to remember a great truth. For instance, the thirty-ninth year of the century has now vanished with all the former years. Where are the pleasures I enjoyed during that year ? Where is the praise, where are the marks of honor given me by others, of which I boasted publicly and on account of which I thought great things of myself ? Where is the money I have invested and spent ? Where are the labor and toil that I so readily undertook for temporal things? All is past and gone with the year that has just come to an end; all is as if it had never been. I have had a great deal of pleasure in eating and drinking; what has become of it all now ? Nothing; no more than if that pleasure had never been ; I feel no more of it now than a poor beggar does, who must be content with bread and water the whole year round. I have often delighted my eyes by looking on beautiful things, and my ears by listening to agreeable conversation and to fine music,

[1] Impietas impii non nocebit ei, in quacunque die conversus fuerit ab impietate sua.—Ezech. xxxiii. 12.

and my other senses by seeking change, by frequenting agreeable company, by walking out, sleeping and other pleasures, and would to God that I had not sometimes, perhaps, thereby offended Him, by acting against my conscience. What have I now of it all? Nothing: it is all vanished like a dream, and has left me nothing but the mere remembrance that I have enjoyed myself. If I had only dreamt of it last night, would I not have just as much to-day? Such is really the case. Now I am beginning a new year; will it not be just like the last? This day twelve-months, if I live so long, will I not have the same to say of it, as I now have of the years that are past? It is clear, then, that everything I can desire, seek, or find in this world is only empty, short-lived, and transitory, and cannot content or fully satisfy my heart, as my own eyes and past experience now prove to me. Therefore the Prophet David is quite right in saying: foolish mortals: "O ye sons of men, why do you love vanity, and seek after lying,"[1] with greater eagerness and longing than if Heaven and earth depended on it? Why do I not, then, devote all my efforts to securing a better and more constant, a real and eternal good, which I can find only in my God? Why do I not, then, make the business of my soul and the service of my God the only business of my life?

They alone are happy who do good.

Again, I can remember what I have done during the past year for God and for my soul, and ask myself: What have I now from it? The labor and trouble are past, and I suffer them now as little as I enjoy now the pleasures of last year; but the treasure and exceeding great reward which I have gained thereby, are stored up for me in Heaven, and I have besides the spiritual consolation that I now experience. Sometimes I have been forced to suffer hunger and thirst, or else I have by voluntary fasting abstained from food and drink, and what worse am I now? I have just as much as if I had eaten and drunk always to satiety. I have sometimes done great violence to myself and closed my eyes so as not to see dangerous objects, or to indulge in curiosity; I have sometimes chastised my body by voluntary penances, and what do I suffer now? Just as little as if I had always indulged myself. The pains that I bore in illness, the contradictions I endured from different individuals, the poverty, want, and annoyance that I bore patiently for the love of God, where are they all now? They are now nothing more than an unpleasant dream, but the merit gained for my soul by them is real and lasting

[1] Filii hominum, utquid diligatis vanitatem, et quæritis mendacium?—Ps. iv. 3.

The prayers, the masses, sermons, confessions, communions, visits to the sick, the works of Christian charity and mercy, the morning devotions and the sleep lost on account of them and the cold suffered, the good intention so often renewed during the employments of every day, where are they all now? The difficulty and trouble attached to them have all disappeared with the year that is past; but the increase of sanctifying grace, the contentment and the eternal goods of Heaven gained thereby are mine still. So that I must confess, that he alone is happy on earth who serves God zealously, and the business of my soul is the only one in which I can always profitably employ myself, without any fear of losing my labor. Therefore, if I am wise I will devote myself to it alone. Such is the sermon that this first day of the year preaches to us.

The time remaining to us is now shorter, and therefore must be employed more zealously for our salvation.

Again, this day not only warns us to work out our salvation, but also to do so more zealously than in the past years, and to do so without delay. Why? Because the less time one knows he has to do some important business, the quicker and more zealously must he set to work. "This, therefore, I say, brethren," is the admonition that this first day of the year gives us, in the words of St. Paul, to the Corinthians: "The time is short."[1] The more years you live, the shorter your lives become; the time was short even when you began to live; but now it is shorter in proportion to the time you have hitherto lived; shorter in this year than in the last; shorter to-day than yesterday. "This, therefore, I say, brethren: The time is short." You know how many years' old you are, and that the same years will never return. You know that you are nearer to death now than formerly, that you have less time to pay off the debts you have contracted, less time to prepare for judgment, less time to secure the grace of a happy death by good works. Therefore, if you love your salvation you must now begin to work for it with greater zeal and earnestness than ever before; that follows as a necessary conclusion.

The present day alone is ours.

There is still another reason why I say that the present day alone is the day of our salvation. What is that? It is a very evident reason; for when can we work out our salvation? In the days that are past? But where are they now; they are gone, and we cannot use them any more. In the days that still remain to us? Where are they then? We have not got them yet; they are still far away from us, and beyond our power. I know how

[1] Hoc itaque dico, fratres: Tempus breve est.—I. Cor. vii. 29.

many years I have lived, but I cannot say how many days I have still to live. Even to-morrow is uncertain for me, for you, and for all. How many of those who were assembled here on this day last year to hear the sermon, are now lying in their graves! So that the present day is the only one (if we can be sure even of living till the end of it) in which we are certain of being able to serve God, in which we can and must work out our salvation.

A wicked life is the result of making a bad use of the present day.

Finally, the chief fault of most people, the principal reason why they do not serve God and attend to their souls as they ought, comes almost solely from their neglect of the present day, for how is it that we make so many good resolutions, that we fulfil so seldom? We are quite ready to say in confession: Now, with the grace of God, I will commit no more sin; I will give up cursing, backbiting, fault-finding, wilful pleasure in impure thoughts, etc. After a sermon and under the influence of the truths we hear in it, we say: I will be more patient in crosses and trials; I will be satisfied with the will of God; I will be more devout in prayer; I will serve God better and more zealously, etc. And we do not made the least change in our former mode of life. The next time we go to confession, we find in the examination of conscience the same faults and sins, in greater number than before. Why so? Because our resolutions are not made for the present day; they regard an indefinite future time. I will amend, we say; but when? In future. I will serve God more zealously; when? In future; and so things remain as they were. Thus the good resolutions are like a shot fired in the air; they do not aim at anything, and they hit nothing. We should rather say: I will amend my life, and to prove my sincerity, I will begin at once. I will not curse to-day, nor backbite, nor be impatient, etc., and to-morrow and the day after I will also be on my guard; I will avoid this or that vice to-day. If we made our resolutions in that way, we should soon find a great change for the better in our lives. You see, now, my dear brethren, that the present day is really the day of our salvation, and in the second part of my sermon I shall give expression to my heartfelt wishes that it may be a happy day for you and me.

Second Part.

Wish and instruction for the clergy.

Reverend members of the clergy, may this be a happy day for you! How many New Years' days have now passed since we

were separated from the world by a great grace that was given to us in preference to so many others, and by a special vow made either in religion, or in ordination, to devote ourselves wholly, body and soul, to the service of God? From that time we have been bound to make profession of a more perfect and holy life; as God commanded even the priests in the Old Law (and of course much more those of the New Law): Go, Moses, go, you who have to announce my Gospel: "Speak to the priests" and say to them: "They shall be holy to their God, and shall not profane His name, for they offer the burnt offering of the Lord, and the bread of their God, and therefore, they shall be holy."[1] They must keep holy the promise they made, and give others a holy example of a blameless, edifying, pure, and chaste life, so as to encourage souls to virtue and to the service of God. They must behave holily in the Church, on the altar, in choir, in singing and praying, at home and in company, in thought, conversation, and manner. The holy state to which I have called them requires that. It is required by the consecrated, priestly hands, which every day have the great honor of touching and sacrificing the Most Sacred Body and Blood of my Son under the appearance of bread. It is required by the esteem in which all men hold them. It is required by the inheritance left them by Jesus Christ, the Eternal Priest, for their support, so that, being free from worldly cares and business, they may serve their God alone and attend to the salvation of their souls. This day suggests to us the question: It is now so many years since I entered this holy state; has every day been passed in a holy manner? If so, oh, great God, what reason have we not to thank Thee! If not, what a strict account we must render to our Judge hereafter, as St. Gregory says: "Christ warns us to be careful, lest we, who seem to have received more than others in this world, should be judged more severely by the Author of the world."[2] What have we to do, then? Will we not amend what it faulty? But when? In future. Oh, that is too indefinite. To-day must be the happy day for us, on which our amendment is to commence. To-day, if we have not already done so, we shall say Mass devoutly, after having purified our consciences; to-day we shall recite attentively the praises of God, or sing them in the divine Office; to-day we shall give good example in all our actions, manners, and

[1] Loquere ad sacerdotes.... Sancti erunt Deo suo, et non polluent nomen ejus; incensum enim Domini, et panes Dei sui offerunt, et ideo sancti erunt.—Levit. xxi. 1–6.

[2] Sollicite nos Christus considerare admonet, ne nos, qui plus cæteris in hoc mundo accepisse aliquid cernimur ab Auctore mundi gravius inde judicemur.

behaviour. Let that be our earnest resolution; let us constantly renew and always keep it every day of our lives. "They shall be holy to their God;"[1] in that way we shall serve our God holily every day. Amen.

For laymen in a high position.

May this day be a happy one for you, gentlemen, who occupy high positions! Once when Charles V. went to confession, the confessor said to him: "I have heard the sins of Charles; let me now hear the sins of the emperor." The priest meant thereby that it was not enough for him to examine and confess his own personal sins, but that he must also take into account the sins that others committed, of which he might perhaps be the cause, owing to his position as emperor. And so I say also to you, that it is not enough for you to see what you have done for your souls during the past days and years; you must also see whether you have done what was necessary for the well-being of the city and country, as far as it depends on the different duties and charges intrusted to you. On your care, intelligence, diligence, writing, and advice depend the execution of justice, the protection of poor widows and orphans, the prevention of punishment, and amendment of bad customs, scandals, and public vices, and the defence and spread of religion and of the honor and glory of God. This day should admonish you to examine your past years, and see whether you have filled your different offices to the general welfare; whether you have not sometimes neglected your duty through human respect, which fetters both tongue and pen, so that one does not always speak, or write, or give the advice that justice requires; or through avarice and greed of gold, which makes one ready to accept bribes and to shut one's eyes to the claims of justice, so that cases are decided against the innocent and in favor of the guilty; or through ignorance, so that offices and employments are sought for which one has not the necessary talents and qualifications; or through carelessness, so that to avoid trouble one does not examine or pay attention to what ought to be corrected or punished. A shepherd would in vain try to excuse himself by saying: I did not know or think that the wolf was coming to injure my flock; or a general by saying: I did not think the enemy would dare to attack us; or a house steward by saying: I did not know that thieves were about to break in and rob my master. You should have known; your duty was to attend to those things and to prevent the injury. In the same way, it is

[1] Sancti erunt Deo suo.

of no use for a superior to say : I did not know that there were bad and suspicious houses in the town and country, and that so many public vices were commonly practised. This excuse is of no avail for one who has authority to rule over the town or country. The words of God by the Prophet Ezechiel are: "The wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand."[1] They who sin against Me will die in their sins, unless they do penance in time ; but I will require their souls at the hands of those whose duty it was to look after them. This day, then, since it is the day of salvation, must put an end to many faults that have, perhaps, been committed in this way, and suggest means to avoid them in future. Therefore, you must say : To-day I will do my duty diligently, honestly, and in a Christian manner ; to-day I will be on my guard, so as not to do, nor say, nor write the least thing contrary to justice ; to-day, if I have the opportunity, I will serve the poor and the orphan solely for the love of God ; to-day, if I can, I will uphold the honor and the cause of religion ; and so on. Oh, what happy and meritorious days you can thus spend !

For married people.

You married people, as Christ warns you in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "Be not solicitous for to-morrow."[2] Yes, you think, but what would become of us if we were only to provide for to-day ? That may do for you and for those who, without any trouble, at a given signal, find food and drink prepared for them, and who, therefore, have not to bother themselves about the price of bread. But we have a house full of children and servants, who must have something to eat to-morrow as well as to-day, and who expect their share even after our death. All that is not the work of one day alone ; we must have many a long day to do it in. But wait a little and understand me: You can have as many days as you like, for to-morrow will be another to-day ; I mean to say that the care of temporal things and of an uncertain future time must not absorb your hearts and minds too much, so as to make you forget or put off the care of your eternal salvation. Whether you expect to live with those under your care to-morrow, or not, you must to-day manage the business of your soul, as if it were to be your last day on earth. Do what you may to support your children, and to provide for them, in future ; but in such a way as to observe the chief duty of Chris-

[1] Impius in iniquitate sua morietur, sanguinem autem ejus de manu tua requiram.—Ezech. iii. 18.

[2] Nolite solliciti esse in crastinum.—Matth. vi. 34.

tian parents and to bestow all your principal care on it, namely, the training them up in piety and the fear of God for Heaven. Love each other; but not to such a degree that you would be ready to offend God in the least for each other's sake. Nor must you fear the ordinary trials, difficulties, and losses that you have to bear, as if they were to last an eternity; the trials of to-day will end with the day. May this day be a happy one, then, for you married people! May you to-day be faithful and loving to each other; may you help each other in bearing the burden of your household,[1] according to the advice of St. Paul to the Galatians: may you live in peace and harmony; may you train up your children and servants to fear God; may you bear with patience the troubles caused you by servants, children, husband, wife, business, and other cares! We know not what will happen to-morrow; but whatever it be, deal with it as you ought to deal with what happens to-day, and every day in the year will be a happy one for you.

For the unmarried.

May this be a happy day for you, unmarried youths and maidens! St. Jerome writes of a young man who was bound hand and foot, and delivered up to the insults of a wicked woman. He could only defend himself with his mouth, and as he was unable to do anything else, he bit off his tongue and spat it with his blood into her face. Cardinal de Vitriaco tells us of a maiden who was persecuted by the impure solicitations of a young man. Acting on divine inspiration, she plucked out her eyes and sent them to him, with the message, that since she could not free herself from him, she would at least have the consolation of not being able to see him. The English Annals tell us of another maiden who cut off her lips and nose, so as to destroy her beauty, and save herself and others from temptation to sin. What do I mean by all this? Do not be afraid. This day does not require you to cut off your lips or pluck out your eyes; if it did, you would not thank me for my New Year's greeting; although it would be far better to inflict those injuries on yourselves, than to injure your purity by sin. Only one question I will ask you: How old are you now? Are you fifteen, eighteen, twenty, twenty-four (I will not put you down as being older, for you would not be pleased at that)! How many of these years have you given to God alone and to your salvation? Shall I measure out your years by days, and your days by hours? I will try to guess how you have spent them. The most of the days of your childhood passed

[1] Alter alterius onera portate.—Gal. vi. 2.

day and amusements, but that cannot be found fault with in childhood; later on, how many hours have you perhaps passed at the door and the window; half days, perhaps, before the looking-glass; whole days in pleasure and amusement? How much time have you lost in sleeping, joking, laughing, and recreation? This day reminds you that all that time is now gone from you, and the greater part of it, too, without profit for your souls. Must not a day, then, come, at last, on which you will begin to look after your soul, as you ought? I do not now allude to all of you, but only to those who have been wanting in this point. And when is that day to come? In future. Oh, that will never do; that is firing in the air. You must commence to-day and continue every day of your lives. You are still young, but you are not on that account a bit more certain of life. Therefore, you must say: To-day I will live chastely, modestly, and purely; to-day I will pluck out my eyes, that is, I will guard them from looking on dangerous objects; to-day I will bite off my tongue, that is, I will refrain from all unbecoming conversation; to-day I will disfigure myself, that is, I will at least avoid excessive luxury and immodesty in dress. In all these faults, the old, whether they are married or not, are very often to blame, for the young readily follow their example. But no matter; may this be a happy day for you.

For widows and the oppressed.

A boy was once sent into the garden to pluck up the weeds. After having worked for a short time, and seen how large and how full of weeds the garden was, he began to cry, and despairing of being able to finish his work, he lay down and fell asleep. He went afterwards to his master and said: I cannot pull up all the weeds, there are too many of them. What nonsense, said the master; go back at once and do what you can to-day; you have to-morrow to work also; I did not expect you to do it all in one day. The boy did as he was told, and found that he was quite able to finish the work. Widows and orphans, poor, oppressed Christians who live in the midst of trials, this parable may be applied to you! It is hard, indeed, to be despised, abandoned, persecuted, to suffer hunger, want, and trouble, to pass the year in trials and misery; but that which, as a general rule, causes impatience, loss of hope, despair, and want of courage is the fact that your imagination prolongs your trials too far into the future. Ah, you think, will there never be an end to my sufferings? Must I spend my whole life in this manner? Must I be tormented till I die? I see no hope of a change; how can I

bear this for many long years to come? Christ says: "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."[1] You must not look so far forward; if you do you will be overcome by present and future evil together. Let every day bear its own burden, and you will not suffer so much. Never think of the time that has still to come, for you may not see a day of it; but think only of the present day. For instance, can I not for this day at least, bear with abandonment, poverty, annoyance and trouble for the love of God, who for my sake spent thirty-three years in poverty, persecution, pain, and suffering? What I suffered yesterday and last year does not hurt me now; what may come to-morrow I do not feel yet, and perhaps I may not have anything to suffer. Therefore, to-day I will resign myself with patience and contentment to the divine decrees, and suffer to-day, for the sake of gaining Heaven, whatever is to be suffered. When I get up to-morrow morning, I will make the same resolution, and will thus continue to the joyful end.

For servants. Such should also be your thought at morning prayers, Christian servants. Renew every day your resolution to serve your employers faithfully, with ready, humble, and patient obedience, as you would God Himself, and to perform your allotted duties after the example of submission given by our Saviour Jesus Christ. Never forget to renew, with all sincerity, the good intention frequently during your work. If you do that my wish will be fulfilled, and this will be a happy day for the salvation of your souls.

For sinners. Sinners (I hope there are none here present), may this be a happy day for you! Oh, certainly, it is especially necessary for you that it should be! As long as you have lived in sin, you have not had a single happy day, but days full of misery and wickedness. How long will you continue to utter your raven's cry of "to-morrow, to-morrow"?[2] some other time I will do penance, amend my life, and begin to serve God. You said the same thing yesterday, and last month, and one, two, three, or more years ago. You are making matters worse by long-continued habits of sin, and the more you put off repentance, the more difficult it will become. The Prophet says to you: "To-day, if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts,"[3] that when the day comes which has no morrow for you, you may not die in your sins. Many have waited for the morrow and when they

[1] Sufficit diei malitia sua.—Matth. vi. 34. [2] Cras, cras!
[3] Hodie, si vocem ejus audieritis, nolite obdurare corda vestra.—Ps. xciv. 8.

least expected it, they were hurled into hell before that morrow came. Oh, woe to you if that should be your end! Perhaps you think it too hard to live always without your forbidden pleasures and accustomed sins? Then take the advice that an experienced confessor once gave to a penitent of his, who was complaining of the same difficulty. The penitent said: How can I keep from seeing that person my whole life long? How can I refrain from that pleasure? How can I always so overcome myself that I will never violate this or that commandment of God? It is impossible. Listen, answered the confessor, and I say the same to you to-day, oh, sinners; could you not keep from sin for one day? Oh, certainly, answered the penitent. Very well, answered the other, and for your penance you shall do so, and come to me to-morrow. The next day the confessor said to him: Now you see that is not so difficult, can you not do to-day what you did yesterday? Try it, the day is not so long. In that way he brought his penitent on from day to day, until the latter had completely conquered the bad habit. Oh, sinner, try that plan; begin to-day, and renew your resolution every morning for each day, so that you may save your soul from the snares of the devil, and bring it safely to eternal happiness. Yes, O my God, it shall be so; to-day, with Thy grace, I will begin. Amen.

End of the Second Volume.

To the greater honor and glory of God, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen of Heaven, and of the holy angels guardian, and for the salvation of souls.

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Index of Sermons.

FOR ALL THE SUNDAYS OF THE YEAR.

In some cases, another Text and Introduction are here given to a Sermon, so that it may be used on the day quoted in this Index.

	Vol.	Page.
First Sunday in Advent.		
Sermon **35.**—On Adultery.	i.	421
Text taken from the Epistle of the day. "Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in chambering and impurities."—Rom. xiii. 13. . . . . Among all the vices, not one is more opposed to Christian morality, than lust, or impurity. Hence the Apostle, while exhorting us always to walk "in honesty," and especially during this sacred time of Advent, at the same time warns us particularly to abstain from this foul sin, concerning which he says elsewhere: Do not name among yourselves a crime so vile and abominable; so common, alas, to-day, in every condition of mankind! I do not wish to-day to take up all the sins which come from this one. There is one in particular which is in the highest degree repugnant, both to morality and to the welfare of the human race. *Then proceed as in the Introduction of the Sermon.*		
Second Sunday in Advent.		
Sermon **54.**—On the Duties of Masters and Mistresses towards their Servants.	ii.	197
Third Sunday in Advent.		
Sermon **75.**—On the Examination of Conscience in the Evening.	ii.	480
Fourth Sunday in Advent.		
Sermon **52.**—On the Duties of Subjects to their Spiritual and Temporal Superiors.	ii.	170
Sunday in the Octave of Christmas.		
Sermon **13.**—On the Duties of the Young to God. .	i.	146
First Sunday after Epiphany.		
Sermon **20.**—On the Course to be Followed by Young People in Selecting a State of Life. . .	i.	234

	Vol.	Page.
Second Sunday after Epiphany.		
Sermon **26.**—On the Course to be Adopted by those who Intend Embracing the Married State.	i.	314
Third Sunday after Epiphany.		
Sermon **27.**—On the Disposition of those who Receive the Sacrament of Matrimony.	i.	326
Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.		
Sermon **28.**—On the Necessity of Married People being in the Friendship of God, that they may not Lose their Souls.	i.	338
Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.		
Sermon **29.**—On the Necessity of Friendship with God in the Married State, in order to have Temporal Happiness.	i.	350
Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.		
Sermon **66.**—On the All-wise Providence of God in Arranging Different States of Life.	ii.	363
Septuagesima Sunday.		
Sermon **22.**—On the Happiness of the Religious Life.	i.	262
Septuagesima Sunday.		
Sermon **67.**—On the Contentment of each one in his State of Life, as far as the Service of God is Concerned.	ii.	378
Sexagesima Sunday.		
Sermon **23.**—On the Great Grace of a Vocation to the Religious Life.	i.	274
Sexagesima Sunday.		
Sermon **58.**—On the Goodness of God towards the Rich.	ii.	250
Quinquagesima Sunday.		
Sermon **72.**—On Shrove-Tide.	ii.	445
First Sunday in Lent.		
Sermon **24.**—On the Happiness of the Unmarried State.	i.	290
Second Sunday in Lent.		
Sermon **25.**—On the Dangers and Graces of the Unmarried State.	i.	300
Third Sunday in Lent.		
Sermon **30.**—On the Love of Married People for, and their Unity with Each Other.	i.	364
Fourth Sunday in Lent.		
Sermon **31.**—On the Duty of Husbands to their Wives.	i.	375
Fifth Sunday in Lent.		
Sermon **32.**—On the Conduct of Wives whose Husbands give them Cause for Disunion.	i.	386

VOL. PAGE.

Easter Sunday.

SERMON **69.**—On the Childlike Confidence with which Every One Ought to Abandon Himself to Divine Providence. . . . . ii. 402

First Sunday after Easter.

SERMON **33.**—On the Duty of Wives to their Husbands. i. 397

Second Sunday after Easter.

SERMON **34.**—On Jealousy in the Married State. . i. 410

Third Sunday after Easter.

SERMON **36.**—On the Unnecessary Troubles of Married People. . . . . i. 431

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

SERMON **37.**—On the Consolation of Married People in Trouble. . . . . i. 445

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

SERMON **38.**—On the Prayer of Married People in their Trouble. . . . . i. 456

Sixth Sunday after Easter.

SERMON **21.**—On Reflection in the Actual Selection of a State of Life. . . . . i. 250

Text.

"These things I have told you: that when the hour shall come, you may remember that I told you of them."—John xvi. 4.

Christ applies these words to you to-day, Christian sons and daughters! Wherefore, this much having been said concerning the different states of life and their difficulties, as well as their obligations, let it suffice for your instruction, that when the time will come for choosing a certain state, you may remember His words and ponder well on the subject beforehand, nor proceed blindly in an affair of such moment. Let us suppose, now, that the time has come for some to deliberate on the selection of a state of life. What shall I do? they think. Which one shall I choose from the number already described to me?

Pentecost Sunday.

SERMON **3.**—On the Dignity of Christians who are Children of God. . . . . i. 33

First Sunday after Pentecost.

SERMON **4.**—On the Life Becoming the Children of God. i. 42

Second Sunday after Pentecost.

SERMON **56.**—On the Evil of being Too Much Occupied. ii. 224

	Vol.	Page
Third Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **57.**—On the Guiltiness of a Too Busy Life.	ii.	237
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **2.**—On the Great Benefit of the Divine Vocation to the Catholic Faith.	i.	24
The text and introduction come after the first Sermon, and then it continues—Oh! What a grace for those who were before in darkness, etc.		
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **8.**—On the Sins of Christians.	i.	85
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **49.**—On the Usefulness of Alms-giving for the Temporal Welfare of Parents and Children.	ii.	131
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **50.**—On the Usefulness of Alms-giving for Eternal Life.	ii.	145
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **63.**—On the Decent Poor.	ii.	318
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **9.**—On the Necessity of Hearing the Word of God in Sermons.	i.	95
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **10.**—How One should Go to Sermons.	i.	108
Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **11.**—How One should Hear Sermons.	i.	119
Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **12.**—How One should Act after Hearing a Sermon.	i.	132
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **53.**—On the Duties of the Laity towards Priests.	ii.	184
Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **55.**—On the Duties of Servants towards their Masters and Mistresses.	ii.	209
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **39.**—On the Christian Training of Children.	ii.	7
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **40.**—On the Reasons why Parents should Bring up their Children in a Christian Manner.	ii.	19
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon **41.**—On the Teaching that Parents should Give their Children.	ii.	31

	Vol.	Page.
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon 42.—On the Watchfulness of Parents over their Children.	ii.	47
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon 43.—On the Due Chastisement of Children.	ii.	58
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon 44.—On the Paternal Chastisement of Children.	ii.	70
Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon 45.—On the Good Example that Parents Should Give their Children.	ii.	80
Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon 46.—On the Necessity of Parents Giving Good Example to their Children.	ii.	93
Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon 4 .—On the Duty of Feeding and Supporting Children.	ii.	106
Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost.		
Sermon 48.—On the Excessive Care that some Parents take of their Children, as far as Temporal Things are concerned.	ii.	118

Index of Sermons.

FOR ALL THE PRINCIPAL FEAST-DAYS OF THE YEAR.

Feast of St. Andrew, Apostle.		
Sermon 58.—On the Goodness of God towards the Rich.	ii.	250
Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the B. V. Mary.		
Sermon 70.—On the Redeeming in Old Age of Lost Time.	ii.	418
Feast of St. Thomas, Apostle.		
Sermon 71.—On Making a Good Use of Present and Future Time, especially for Young People.	ii.	432
Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord.		
Sermon 64.—On the Happiness of the Poor.	ii.	332
Feast of St. Stephen.		
Sermon 59.—On the Ingratitude of the Rich towards God.	ii.	262

	Vol.	Page.
Feast of St. John the Evangelist.		
Sermon **65**.—On the Divine Decree, which has Appointed a State and Condition of Life for Each One.	ii.	350
Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord.		
Sermon **76**.—On the Use of the Present Time.	ii.	493
Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord.		
Sermon **7**.—On the False and True Happiness of Christians.	i.	74
Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.		
Sermon **67**.—On the Contentment of Each One in his State of Life, as far as the Service of God is concerned.	ii.	378
Feast of St. Matthias, Apostle.		
Sermon **68**.—On the Contentment of Each One in his State of Life, as far as the Dangers of the Soul are concerned.	ii.	391
Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.		
Sermon **6**.—On the Necessary Occupation of Christians.	i.	63

Text.

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord."—Luke i. 38.

What a beautiful example of the Incarnate Wisdom Mary places before us to-day: Behold the handmaid of the Lord! What humility! says St. Bernard:—She is chosen to be the Mother of God, and calls herself "handmaid"! Would that we, my dear brethren, imitated in all our actions this great virtue of the Blessed Virgin! Would that we followed her example in being servants and handmaids of the Lord! For this is, in truth, the sole end for which we were created; this is the most necessary business we have to transact all through this life; namely, to serve God and save our souls, a business, nevertheless, which too many, alas! neglect. This is the division of my sermon to-day, etc.

Feast of SS. Philip and James, Apostles.		
Sermon **73**.—On Morning Prayer.	ii.	457
Feast of St. John the Baptist.		
Sermon **14**.—Our After Life Depends on our Conduct during Youth.	i.	159
Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.		
Sermon **1**.—On the Truth of the Catholic Religion.	i.	11
Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.		
Sermon **18**.—On the Care of One's Precious Soul.	i.	212

Text.

"And Mary, rising up, in those days, went into the hill country, with haste."—Luke i. 39.

VOL. PAGE.

How great an undertaking for the delicate Virgin Mary, who had scarcely ever appeared in the sight of man outside of the Temple walls! Now, at once, she undertook to perform a long and arduous journey, over hills and mountains. "She went into the hill country, with haste," even. Why did she do this? She saluted Elizabeth. Why? Was that a sufficient reason for undertaking such a journey? No, my dear brethren, something else was of greater moment in this journey. Mary had a purpose. What was it? It was to free a soul from slavery, to liberate it from the power of the devil, and to increase the number of the children of God; namely, the thought of the soul of John, as yet enclosed in his mother's womb, lent wings to the Virgin, that by her presence she might sanctify the aforesaid mother, cleansed from original sin. O human soul! I think, here, O human soul! What a precious treasure thou art, since to gain thee to God a few moments sooner, the Mother of God sets out in such haste! And this precious soul is held in such poor esteem by the greater part of mankind, that very often they are unwilling to move hand or foot to preserve it! On the one hand, we have cause to rejoice, on the other, to deplore. I shall take up both subjects to-day. The most precious thing in the world is the human soul. I will show this in the first part, etc.

Feast of St. James, Apostle.

SERMON **15**.—On the Respect that Children Owe their Parents. . . . . i. 172

Text.

"Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee, with her sons."—Matth. xx. 20.

Why did not the sons themselves ask that favor of Christ, when they stood together close at hand? Or why did they not strengthen their mother's request with their own prayers? Among other reasons for this, I should ascribe a feeling of reverence for their mother, whom they did not wish to deprive of the honor of obtaining the first place in Heaven for them, by her intercession alone. Moreover, it is only proper that children should be silent, while their mother speaks, etc. Christian children, behold the lesson set forth for you, according to which you should conduct yourselves towards your parents. In what manner? Continue—Honor thy father and thy mother, etc.

Feast of St. Anne.

SERMON **19**.—On the Care of One's Only Soul. . . i. 222

Text.

"When he had found one pearl of great price, he

VOL. PAGE.

went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it."—Matth. xiii. 46.

The holy Mother Anne found and gave to the world a precious pearl, and in truth an only one, when she brought forth the Virgin Mary, who was to give birth to the Saviour of the whole human race. Therefore, the Church justly sings to-day: Let us rejoice in the Lord while celebrating this feast-day in honor of St. Anne, etc. My dear brethren, we carry about with us that precious as well as only pearl, that is to say, our only soul!

Feast of St. Laurence, Martyr.

SERMON **16.**—On the Obedience that Children Owe their Parents. . . . . i. 185

Text.

"What displeases you in me, Father? Have you found me degenerate?"—Ecclesia.

Life of St. Laurence.

Thus spoke St. Laurence to Pope Sixtus, his spiritual Father, using the words which St. Ambrose sets before the Church to-day. Sixtus was dragged away to martyrdom; hence Laurence wept bitterly, and called after him: How can a father proceed without his son? How can the priest hasten on without his deacon? In what have I offended you that you leave me here? What displeases you in me, Father? Have you found me a degenerate son? Thus, without doubt, Laurence loved his spiritual Father, so that he could not separate himself from him except with great sorrow; or, rather, I should say, so much did he glow with love for God, that he suffered torments, because he could not receive martyrdom together with his Father. My dear brethren, from this I take the occasion of following up the sermon begun some time ago, concerning the duty of children towards their parents. Would that all children could say these same words truthfully to their parents: What is displeasing to you in me, Father? Father, mother, have I never given you any cause for sorrow? You have not found me degenerate? Happy children, to whom their parents could with truth reply: No, my son, no, my daughter, I can remember nothing which displeases me! I will endeavor, as far as in me lies, to make this truth manifest in to day's sermon. I have discussed the reverence due to parents; hear, now, Christian children, another honor which you ought to show them, namely, the honor of obedience, etc.

Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

SERMON **17.**—On the Love that Children owe their Parents. i. 199

Text.

"Mary was taken up into Heaven."—Ecclesia.

VOL. PAGE.

This reward was due to that Mother who loved her Son so much, who gave Him a hospitality far different from that which He received from Martha; who bore Him in her womb, and suckled Him and carried Him in her arms; it was a reward fitting to be bestowed by that Son who specially commands all children to love and honor their parents; and therefore He brought His Mother, body and soul, into eternal glory.

Mary was taken up into Heaven! Rejoice, O angels, in the glory of your Queen! Let the whole world exult, because now it has an advocate in Heaven! Queen of the whole world, our Mother! We rejoice and we praise thee with our whole heart! Ah! look down to-day from thy throne of glory upon us miserable ones, sighing to thee in this valley of tears, and grant us the grace of so living that we may see thee one day in glory! Grant also to all thy sons and daughters, that, according to the example of thy Divine Son, who thus honors thee, they may show to their parents the love and honor they owe them! And this is, finally, another obligation incumbent on you, Christian children; namely, the honor of love that you owe to your parents, as I will now prove.

Feast of St. Bartholomew, Apostle.

SERMON **74.**—On the Use and Nature of Morning Prayer. ii. 467

Feast of St. Matthew, Apostle.

SERMON **62.**—How Deserving of Help the Poor are. ii. 304

Feast of St. Michael, Archangel.

SERMON **5.**—On the Dignity and Obligation of Men who have Angels as their Guardians. . . . . i. 52

Feast of SS. Simon and Jude.

SERMON **60.**—On the Duty of the Rich towards the Poor. ii. 274

Feast of All-Saints.

SERMON **51.**—On the Just Claims that the Poor Souls in Purgatory have on our Help. . . . . ii. 159

Feast of the Dedication of a Church.

SERMON **61.**—On the Vain Excuses of the Rich with regard to Alms-giving. . . . . ii. 289

Alphabetical Index of Subjects.

—A.—

Abraham.

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
Sacrifices his son in obedience to the will of God.	20	10	i.	245

Adultery.

A terrible sin. The whole Sermon.	35		i.	421
Hated by every one.	35	2, 3	i.	423
Injurious to the whole human race.	35	4	i.	424
Many other sins come from it.	35	5	i.	425
All Christians should avoid it.	35	7	i.	425
An abomination before God and brings severe punishment.	35	9 to end.	i.	426

Age (old).

When we consider ourselves, as we should often do, we can find out that we are growing old.	70	2, 3, 4, 6	ii.	420
Many reject this thought.	70	5	ii.	422

Alms-giving.

Usefulness of alms-giving to secure temporal welfare. The whole Sermon.	49		ii.	131
Alms-giving the best way to become rich.	49	11	ii.	138
Niggardliness towards the poor a way to become poor.	49	14	ii.	142
Eternal treasures gained by alms-giving. The whole Sermon.	50		ii.	145
Folly of those who give alms sparingly, in order to save up more for their children.	50	9 to end.	ii.	153
Alms-giving obligatory under pain of sin. The whole Sermon.	60		ii.	274
Many lost eternally through neglect of alms-giving.	60	7	ii.	281
How much alms one is bound to give.	60	12	ii.	286
Useless excuses of the rich, who say they can give little or no alms. The whole Sermon.	61		ii.	289
Even the poor can and must give alms.	61	7, 8	ii.	296

Ambition.

Has driven many so far that they sought for divine honors.	3	1	i.	34

Angels.	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
God has given to every one an angel as tutor.	5	4	i.	54
Greatness and excellence of the angels.	5	5	i.	55
Their beauty.	5	6	i.	56
These great princes of heaven are guardians of our bodies and souls.	5	7	i.	57
The benefits we receive from them deserve our deepest gratitude.	5	10	i.	59
Especially since they are much greater and more excellent than we.	5	11	i.	60
They do good to us, although we are unworthy.	5	12	i.	61
Apostles.				
The Christian religion preached throughout the world by twelve Apostles.	1	8	i.	17
They had neither high position, nor money, nor influence, nay, were hated everywhere.	1	9	i.	17
And yet they undertook and accomplished the spread of religion in the greatest cities of the world.	1	10	i.	18
—B.—				
Benefit.				
The greatness of a benefit measured by its utility and necessity to eternal life.	2	1	i.	25
Blanche, St.				
How she brought up her son Louis in the fear of God.	41	7	ii.	31
Blind.				
We mortals are blind in the understanding, even in things that we actually see.	67	4	ii.	382
Body.				
Generally better cared for than the soul.	18	9, 10	i.	218
Busy.				
Too busy a life is an idle and useless one before God. The whole Sermon.	56		ii.	224
Is a sinful life. The whole Sermon.	57		ii.	237
Withdraws the heart from heavenly things.	57	4 to 8	ii.	240
How to arrange one's business so as not to neglect the soul.	57	10 to end.	ii.	246
—C.—				
Catholics.				
Can nowadays hardly bear to hear the truths of religion that Jews and heathens formerly received.	1	6	i.	16

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
Owe God heartfelt thanks for vocation to the true faith. The whole Sermon.	2		i.	24
Many are thankless for this grace, to their own deeper damnation. . .	2	8, 9	i.	31
Children.				
As they are in their youth, so they will be, generally, in their after life. The whole Sermon. . . .	14		i.	159
Owe their parents honor and reverence in all their actions. . .	15	1 to 8	i.	173
Many grievous faults against this duty. .	15	8 to 13	i.	178
Some threaten to beat their parents, and bring down fearful punishments on themselves from God. . .	15	13, 14	i.	182
Must obey their parents. The whole Sermon.	16		i.	185
Are ignorant and must be instructed by their parents.	16	2 and fol.	i.	186
Commanded by God to obey their parents in all things not contrary to His law.	16	7, 8	i.	190
Many sin against this in various ways. .	16	11	i.	192
Grievous punishments inflicted in the Old Law on such children. . .	16	16	i.	195
And in our days, too. . . .	16	17	i.	196
They are bound to love their parents. The whole Sermon. . . .	17		i.	199
Of what kind this love must be. . .	17	5	i.	203
Many sin against this in troubling their parents by leading bad lives. .	17	6, 7	i.	204
Or by refusing to serve and help them in want.	17	8, 9, 10,	i.	205
Or by forgetting their deceased parents.	17	12	i.	208
Those who have no children should rejoice.	36	8, 9	i.	438
Also those who have too many. . .	36	13, 14	i.	440
Also those whose children die young. .	36	16	i.	442
Naughty children a great trial for parents.	37	1	i.	445
Sickly children must also be loved by their parents.	37	3, 4	i.	447
Children must thank their parents for correction. . . .	43	14	ii.	68
Children must thank their parents for correction.	44	15	ii.	79
Children are like monkeys and imitate all they see their parents do. . .	45	5 to 10	ii.	84
How they must act in choosing a state of life. *See State.*				
Training of children. *See Parents.*				
Christ.				
In Him alone true happiness to be found.	7	8	i.	82
Is an example of childlike obedience. .	16	10	i.	192
Loves His Church.	31	4	i.	378
Christians.				
Have cause to rejoice that they are in the true religion. . . .	1	12	i.	20

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page
Impious Christians have cause for shame, since they do not live according to their religion.	1	13	i.	21
Christian Church complains of bad Christians.	1	14	i.	22
Christians become children of God in Baptism.	3	2	i.	35
What honor and happiness this is.	3	4, 5, 6, 8	i.	36
Good Christians have not been able to contain their joy at this.	3	7	i.	38
Many tepid Christians think little of this honor.	3	9	i.	39
Christians must live as becomes children of God and brethren of Jesus Christ. The whole Sermon.	4		i.	42
They must live according to their heavenly Father and according to the example of Jesus Christ.	4	5, 6	i.	45
Few Christians do so.	4	7	i.	46
A great shame for a child of God to be a slave of the devil.	4	9	i.	48
Many act thus shamefully	4	10	i.	49
Christians have more light and grace than the Jews and Gentiles formerly had; therefore their sins are less to be excused.	8	2 and fol.	i.	86
They have more helps and opportunities to good.	8	8	i.	90
Have sworn an oath of special fealty to God.	8	10	i.	92
Therefore their sins are worse than those of Jews and heathens.	8	11, 12	i.	93
Confidence in God.				
Childlike confidence in divine providence makes men happy. The whole Sermon.	69		ii.	402
How unreasonably they act who do not trust in God.	69	10 to end.	ii.	413
Contentment.				
All should be content with the will of God.	36	18	i.	444
All should be content with the will of God.	37	15	i.	455
Contentment of each one in his state. *See State.*				
Conscience.				
A good conscience is the best comfort in all adversities.	37	10	i.	452
Examination of conscience before going to bed. *See Time.*				
Correction.				
Every one is bound to practise fraternal correction.	43	1	ii.	59

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
—D.—				
Day.				
The first day of the year is especially a day of salvation. . .	76	1 to 6.	ii.	494
The present day alone is ours. . .	76	6	ii.	497
A wicked life is the result of not employing well the present day. . .	76	7	ii.	498
How people of every state must act to employ well the present day. . .	76	8 to end.	ii.	498
David.				
Teaches us how to take care of our souls.	19	5	i.	226
Devil.				
Tries to keep sinners from hearing sermons.	9	10	i.	103
Values the human soul very highly. .	18	5	i.	216
Finds many who help him to destroy souls.	19	13	i.	231
—E.—				
Edmund, St.				
How his mother instructed him in the fear of the Lord. . . .	41	7	ii.	38
End.				
We must consider, not whether we wish to attain our end, but the means of attaining it.	21	1	i.	251
—F.—				
Faith.				
The Catholic is the only true Faith. .	1	11	i.	20
Vocation to the Catholic Faith is the greatest benefit bestowed on us by God, and deserves our constant gratitude. The whole Sermon. . .	2		i.	24
This Faith is absolutely necessary to eternal life.	2	2	i.	25
Without this no other benefit of God can be of any use to us. . .	2	3	i.	25
God has called us to this Faith, in preference to countless thousands of infidels and heretics. . . .	2	4, 5	i.	26
Special benefit that we are born and reared in this Faith, when the Church enjoys peace and tranquillity. .	2	6, 7	i.	28

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
—G.—				
God.				
Love of God for us mortals in giving each of us an angel guardian.	5	1 to 9	i.	53
God is the Architect of the human soul.	18	2	i.	213
Has created it carefully according to His own image.	18	3	i.	214
Values the soul very highly.	18	4	i.	214
Must be asked for counsel in the selection of a state of life. *See State.*				
Without His help no means can succeed.	29	1, 2, 3	i.	351
Arranges everything according to His own will.	29	4	i.	353
Some act without or against God, and have no luck.	29	6 to 15	i.	354
How we must act with God in all our affairs, so as to insure prosperity.	29	15 to end.	i.	360
Confidence in God. *See Confidence.*				
God can help us in all circumstances.	69	3, 4	ii.	405
Cares for us even in the least things.	69	5	ii.	406
His almighty power can do everything.	69	6	ii.	408
He wishes to arrange all things for our greater good.	69	7	ii.	408
He has promised to protect all who hope in Him.	69	9	ii.	411
—H.—				
Happiness.				
In what true happiness consists.	7	1	i.	76
Cannot be found in worldly goods.	7	2 and fol.	i.	76
But in Christ our Lord alone.	7	8	i.	82
Is nevertheless least thought of by blind mortals.	7	9	i.	83
Heathens.				
The ancient heathens made gods of their heroes that the latter might act as gods.	4	2	i.	44
They looked upon it as a shame that one who represented the person of a god in a comedy should remain a slave.	4	8	i.	47
Heretics.				
Their false doctrine about marriage.	27	1	i.	327
Honor.				
Honor and glory of Christians in becoming children of God by baptism.	3	4	i.	36
This honor not valued much by many.	3	9	i.	39
Honors change manners.	4	1	i.	43

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
Humility.				
Without humility, chastity cannot long be preserved.	25	8, 9	i.	307
Husband.				
Must not allow his wife to pervert him.	28	10, 11, 12	i.	344
Has authority over his wife, but it should be an authority of love.	31	1 to 6.	i.	376
Sins by being harsh with his wife.	31	6	i.	381
By not giving her proper food.	31	7	i.	381
By treating her as a servant.	31	8	i.	382
By hating her and loving others.	31	9	i.	382
How impiously such husbands act.	31	12	i.	383
They must expect severe punishment.	31	13	i.	384
Cannot be excused.	31	14	i.	384
Husbands who have bad wives, are deserving of pity.	33	16	i.	407
How they must act with them.	33	17	i.	408
How they must act so as not to give their wives occasion for jealousy.	34	8	i.	416
—I.—				
Idleness.				
An idle and voluptuous life is a sinful life.	57	2	ii.	239
Imagination.				
Unnecessary troubles come from it.	36	3 to 7.	i.	434
Such imaginations should be changed.	36	7	i.	437
Impurity.				
Of Christians less to be excused, than that of Jews or heathens.	8	6	i.	90
Wickedness of those who lead the innocent into impurity.	24	12	i.	299
Ingratitude.				
For the grace of vocation to the true faith causes a deeper damnation hereafter.	2	8, 9	i.	31
Injustice.				
Leads to poverty and eternal damnation.	48	7 to 11	ii.	124
Isaac.				
An example of childlike obedience.	16	9	i.	191
—J.—				
Jealousy.				
What it is.	34	1	i.	411
Never worse than in the married state.	34	2	i.	412
What evils and sins are caused by it.	34	3, 4, 5,	i.	412

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
How married people must act towards each other, so as to give no cause for jealousy.	34	6 to end.	i.	414

—L.—

Lay People.

Should honor priests. The whole Sermon.	53		ii.	184
Many sin against this.	53	17	ii.	195

Life.

The lives of Christians must be such as becomes children of God and brethren of Jesus Christ. The whole Sermon.	4		i.	42
Life must be arranged according to the will of our heavenly Father.	4	5	i.	45
And to the example of Jesus Christ.	4	6	i.	46

—M.—

Married State.

They who wish to enter it must take counsel from God.	26	2, 3, 5, 12	i.	315
Difficulties of the married state.	26	5, 6, 7, 8,	i.	316
Troubles of it.	26	9, 10, 11	i.	320
Marriages of many are unhappy because God is not consulted.	26	12, 13	i.	322
Advice for married people who have not consulted God.	26	16	i.	325
False teaching of heretics about the married state.	27	1	i.	327
Marriage a holy sacrament.	27	2	i.	328
Must be entered on with a pure conscience.	27	3	i.	328
Those who sin in this particular.	27	4, 5, 6	i.	329
No blessing in a marriage entered on unworthily.	27	7	i.	332
The chief end of marriage.	27	8	i.	332
Those who marry for sensual pleasure are often given over to the power of the devil.	27	9, 10	i.	333
Married state must be entered on with a pure love.	27	11	i.	335
Because this is wanting, many unhappy marriages.	27	12	i.	336
Instruction for married people who have been wanting in this point.	27	13	i.	336
Dangers of the soul in the married state.	28	2, 3, 4	i.	340
Dangerous obligations of the married state.	28	5 to end.	i.	341
Amidst all these dangers, married people can be good, if they remain in the friendship of God.	28	16	i.	348
They must be in the friendship of God to have temporal prosperity. The whole Sermon.	29		i.	350

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
Married People.				
Unity with each other most necessary. The whole Sermon.	30		i.	364
A state pleasing to God when they are united.	30	4	i.	367
A happy state for people who live in harmony.	30	5, 6	i.	368
The devil tries to destroy that harmony.	30	7	i.	369
Unhappiness of married people when unity is wanting.	30	8	i.	369
Cause generally given for that unhappiness before marriage.	30	12	i.	372
How married people must console themselves in troubles caused by children	37	1 to 8	i.	445
Or when one of them gets sick, or dies.	37	8 to end.	i.	451
Difficulties teach married people and their whole households to pray.	38	7, 8	i.	460
Martyr.				
The life of a religious is a difficult martyrdom. *See Religious State.*				
The martyrs rejoiced in their torments.	23	6	i.	280
Masters and Mistresses.				
Are bound to care for the salvation of their servants.	54	1, 2, 3,	ii.	198
They must encourage their servants to do good, and give them good example.	54	4	ii.	200
Many fail to do so.	54	5 to 11	ii.	200
The welfare of a household depends on how they lead on their servants to good.	54	11 to end.	ii.	205
Modesty.				
A means of preserving purity.	25	9, 10	i.	308
Mortals.				
Are strangers and travellers in this world, exposed to countless dangers.	5	2	i.	53
God gives to all different helps against those dangers.	5	3	i.	54
And besides has given to each one an angel as tutor.	5	4	i.	54
Most mortals are ignorant of the art of living and dying well.	9	3, 4	i.	97
They must, therefore, be instructed herein by sermons.	9	5, 6, 7	i.	99
Morning Prayer.				
The best and most useful prayer, and that which is most pleasing to God, is when many assemble together for the purpose.	74	10 to end.	ii.	474

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
Mothers.				
Sin by not nursing their children, when they are able to do so.	47	5, 6	ii	111
—O.—				
Obedience.				
Due to parents from their children. The whole Sermon.	16		i.	185
—P.—				
Parents.				
Hold the place of princes and kings, nay, even of God Himself, with regard to their children.	15	1, 2	i.	173
Must be honored by their children always.	15	5	i.	176
Are the best guides of their children.	16	4	i.	187
Are specially enlightened by God to govern their children well.	16	5	i.	188
Are the greatest benefactors of their children.	17	2, 3	i.	200
Must therefore be specially loved by the latter.	17	4	i.	202
Must be preferred, as far as support is concerned, to one's own wife and children.	17	11	i.	208
How they must act in choosing a state of life for their children. *See State.*				
Have great trouble with their children.	26	9	i.	320
Must bring up their children for their last end. The whole Sermon.	39		ii.	7
Most parents train up their children's bodies, but neglect their souls.	39	3 to 8	ii.	9
The salvation of children depends on the training their parents give them.	39	8 to 13	ii.	13
Children lost eternally cry out for vengeance against their parents.	39	13	ii.	16
The temporal happiness of parents consists in their giving their children a good training.	40	1	ii.	21
Training no good unless the children are brought up piously.	40	2 to 5	ii.	21
Sufferings of parents from ill-reared children.	40	5 to 8	ii.	23
The temporal and eternal misery of parents a just punishment for their neglect in training their children.	40	8	ii.	25
Bad training a grievous sin for parents. God and the whole heavenly court will take revenge for it.	40	9 to 14	ii.	25
Many are therefore lost eternally.	40	14	ii.	29
How they are to give their children good instruction. The whole Sermon.	41		ii.	31
Many teach their children evil.	41	11 to end.	ii.	41
How they must be watchful over their children. The whole Sermon.	42		ii.	47

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
To what this watchfulness must be directed.	42	4, 5	ii.	50
Great fault of parents in this respect.	42	6 to end.	ii.	51
Must punish and chastise their children, when the latter do wrong. The whole Sermon.	43		ii.	58
Most parents are wanting herein.	43	4 to 12	ii.	62
Thus bring their children to eternal ruin.	43	12	ii.	66
Must therefore expect severe punishment.	43	13	ii.	67
How children are to be chastised parentally. The whole Sermon.	44		ii.	70
Great faults committed in this respect by parents.	44	3 to 11	ii.	72
Chastisement must be administered with moderation and love.	44	11 to end.	ii.	76
Parents must give their children good example. The whole Sermon.	45		ii.	80
When they sin they kill many other souls.	45	10 to 14	ii.	87
If all parents lived holily, the whole world would be good.	45	15	ii.	90
Without the parents' good example, all other means of rearing up children well are useless. The whole Sermon.	46		ii.	92
Parents are bound to pray to God for themselves and their children, that they may do their duty.	46	14	ii.	103
They must give their children proper nourishment. The whole Sermon.	47		ii.	106
Manifold faults of parents in this respect.	47	5 to end.	ii.	111
Folly of parents who are too anxious for their children's temporal welfare. The whole Sermon.	48		ii.	118
They must look after their own souls first.	48	5, 6	ii.	122
Wicked parents who try to help their children by unjust means.	48	7 to end	ii.	124
Those who have many children must give generous alms. The whole Sermon.	49		ii.	131
See Alms-giving.				
Peace.				
True happiness consists in peace of mind.	64	3	ii.	334
Persecution.				
In spite of persecutions the Christian faith was spread throughout the world.	1	9, 10	i.	18
Piety.				
Brings every happiness and blessing.	29	12	i.	358
Philosophers.				
Looked upon the Christian religion as contrary to all reason.	1	3	i.	13

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
Poor.				
Those who are poor through their own fault, must ascribe their misfortune to themselves.	37	6	i.	449
Consolation for those who are poor by divine decree.	37	7, 8	i.	450
All poor, no matter who they are, are deserving of help, since they represent the person of Christ. The whole Sermon.	62		ii.	304
Even deceitful, ungrateful and wicked beggars are deserving of help.	62	5 to 11	ii.	308
The decent poor are especially deserving of help, because they are in greater necessity than any others. The whole Sermon.	63		ii.	318
They who persecute and oppress the poor, must expect severe punishment.	63	7, 8	ii.	325
Advice and consolation for the poor.	63	10	ii.	328
Advice and consolation for the poor.	64	19	ii.	346
How happy the poor when they are satisfied with the will of God. The whole Sermon.	64		ii.	332
They live in peace and contentment of mind.	64	4	ii.	335
They live more comfortably, eat, drink and sleep better than the rich.	64	8, 9	ii.	339
Are more like to Christ.	64	11	ii.	340
Therefore, many choose voluntary poverty.	64	12	ii.	341
The poor who are satisfied with the will of God, are more certain of their salvation than the rich.	64	13 to end.	ii.	342
Poverty of Spirit.				
Must go with the care of temporal goods.	28	14, 15	i.	346
Prayer.				
The gift of prayer a great benefit of God.	38	1	i.	457
Difficulties experienced in public and private necessities drive us to it.	38	2 to 10	i.	458
They drive us to the best kind of prayer.	38	10 to end.	i.	462
Prayer must be humble.	38	10	i.	462
Prayer must be fervent.	38	14	i.	464
In time of prosperity our prayers are not fervent.	38	15	i.	465
Constant prayer a means of maintaining original purity.	25	11, 12	i.	309
Power of prayer to the Blessed Virgin.	25	13, 14	i.	311
Best prayer when many pray together.	74	9 to end.	ii.	474
Morning and evening prayer. *See Time.*				
Pride.				
In a Christian is less to be excused, than in a Jew or heathen.	8	4	i.	88

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
Priests.				
Must be held in honor. The whole Sermon.	53		ii.	184
Are raised by God to a great dignity.	53	3	ii.	185
Have the most excellent office of all.	53	4, 5	ii.	187
Represent the person of Jesus Christ.	53	7	ii.	189
Even crowned heads have bowed before them.	53	13	ii.	193
Even wicked priests must be honored.	53	14, 15	ii.	193
Providence.				
Of God rules the world.	65	1 to 4	ii.	351
Has appointed a state for each one.	65	4, 5	ii.	354
Folly of those who complain of it.	65	8 to end.	ii.	357
Folly of those who complain of it.	66	11	ii.	373
All-wise Providence of God in arranging different states. The whole Sermon.	66		ii.	363
Which we must admire and praise.	66	6	ii.	368
Resignation to Providence for all states in general, and in particular.	66	12 to end.	ii.	373
Happy they who confidently resign themselves to the Providence of God. The whole Sermon.	69		ii.	402
Purgatory.				
It is a most excellent act of charity towards our neighbor to help the souls in purgatory. The whole Sermon.	51		ii.	159
Those souls are in great necessity.	51	2	ii.	160
They unceasingly sigh to be released.	51	7, 8	ii.	163
Wonderful charity of saintly Christians for those souls.	51	10	ii.	165
—R.—				
Reckoning.				
Strict reckoning demanded in judgment for having neglected to hear sermons.	9	15	i.	106
Religion.				
Spread of the Christian religion throughout the world the greatest miracle, when all the circumstances are taken into account. The whole Sermon.	1		i.	11
This religion comes from God alone and is the only true religion.	1	11	i.	20
Religious State.				
How happy it is. The whole Sermon.	22		i.	262
Is not happy according to the judgment of the world.	22	1	i.	263
Resembles the happiness of Heaven.	22	2	i.	264
Everything in it helps to constant knowledge and recollection of God.	22	3, 4	i.	265
Perfect love of God found in it with greatest certainty.	22	5, 6	i.	266

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
The soul enjoys in it constant peace with God.	22	7, 8, 9	i.	268
The lesson to be derived from this.	22	11, 12	i.	270
How great the grace of vocation to it. The whole Sermon.	23		i.	274
Has all the marks of predestination.	23	1	i.	275
The life of a religious resembles martyrdom.	23	2 to 5	i.	276
This martyrdom cheerfully endured by a religious.	23	5 to 9	i.	279
Religious vocation a sure sign of eternal happiness.	23	9	i.	283
Happy they who get it.	23	10	i.	283
What parents, children and others must learn herefrom.	23	11 to end.	i.	284
Repentance.				
How dangerous to go to sleep in the state of sin without repentance and sorrow.	75	10	ii.	488
Revenge (Desire of).				
On the part of a Christian is less to be excused than in a Jew or heathen.	8	5	i.	88
Reverence.				
Due to parents from their children. The whole Sermon.	15		i.	172
Rich.				
The rich spend their money on unnecessary things and forget the poor.	50	11, 12	ii.	155
The rich spend their money on unnecessary things and forget the poor.	61	1 to 4	ii.	290
Goodness of God to them. The whole Sermon.	58		ii.	250
Threatened with woe.	58	1	ii.	251
Riches can be used for good and for evil.	58	2, 3	ii.	252
Riches serve for the welfare of the body and of the soul.	58	5 to 8	ii.	254
The rich can free themselves from all anxiety of soul.	58	9 to 15	ii.	257
Must therefore be grateful to God.	58	15	ii.	261
Most rich people are very ungrateful to Him. The whole Sermon.	59		ii.	262
Bound under pain of sin to help the poor. The whole Sermon.	60		ii.	274
What alms one is bound to give.	60	13	ii.	286
Vain excuses of the rich who say they can give little or no alms. The whole Sermon.	61		ii.	289
Must expect severe punishment if their extravagance prevents them from giving alms.	63	6, 7	ii.	324
Still more severe if they oppress and persecute the poor.	63	8	ii.	326

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
The rich generally lead troubled lives.	64	5	ii.	336
Have a difficulty to gain Heaven.	64	11, 12	ii.	341

—S.—

Salvation.

Eternal salvation the only necessary business of Christians. The whole Sermon.	6		i.	63
All other things must give way to it.	6	3	i.	66
All depends on it.	6	4	i.	67
If it is neglected the loss is irreparable.	6	5	i.	68
Yet it is generally neglected.	6	6 and fol.	i.	69

Scandal.

Given by Christians through immodesty in dress, less to be excused than that given by Jews or heathens.	8	7	i.	90

Sermons.

Necessary for the salvation of most people to hear sermons often.	9	1 to 8	i.	96
Very useful for those who are in the state of sin.	9	8, 9, 10	i.	101
Also for the just.	9	11	i.	104
They are to be pitied who seldom hear sermons.	9	12, 13, 14	i.	105
Must therefore give strict account.	9	15	i.	106
How one should go to sermons. The whole Sermon.	10		i.	
A well prepared heart required for this.	10	3	i.	111
In what this preparation consists.	10	4 and fol.	i.	111
To come too late to sermons an irreverence towards God.	10	8	i.	113
An ingratitute to God.	10	10	i.	115
A want of love for God.	10	11	i.	115
Those who come too late derive little or no fruit.	10	12 and fol.	i.	116
How to hear sermons. The whole Sermon.	11		i.	119
God speaks to us in sermons of a most necessary business.	11	2	i.	121
Therefore constant attention is required.	11	3 and fol.	i.	122
Sermons must be heard with great desire to profit by them.	11	9 to end.	i.	127
What must be done after the sermons. The whole Sermon.	12		i.	132
What is heard in sermons must be taken to heart and acted upon.	12	2 to 10	i.	133
To learn truths in sermons and not act upon them brings reprobation from God in this life.	12	10, 11	i.	139
A more severe account in judgment.	12	12	i.	142
A deeper damnation in eternity.	12	13	i.	143

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
Servants.				
How they must serve their employers. The whole Sermon.	55		ii.	209
In what their fidelity consists.	55	1	ii.	210
In how many ways it may be violated.	55	2 to 6	ii.	211
Must obey their employers.	55	7, 8	ii.	215
Must obey with patience.	55	13	ii.	222
Many sin against this obedience.	55	9, 10, 11	ii.	217
Service (of God).				
Consists in doing the will of God.	67	7, 8, 9	ii.	384
Although He may require lowly duties from us.	67	10	ii.	386
To omit them and do something better, would not be to serve God.	67	11	ii.	387
Shrove-tide.				
No more liberty is given to do wrong during this season, than at any other time. The whole Sermon.	72		ii.	445
Sin.				
There is no sin that is not thought little of somewhere or other.	35	1	i.	442
The sins of Christians are greater and less to be excused than those of Jews and heathens. The whole Sermon.	8		i.	85
Means of guarding against the dangers of sin.	68	9	ii.	400
Past sins can be made the occasion of gaining greater glory in Heaven.	70	11	ii.	429
Sinners.				
Very necessary for them often to hear sermons.	9	8, 9	i.	101
Soul.				
Is a most precious image, whose Maker is God.	18	2	i.	213
Is created most carefully to the image of God.	18	3	i.	214
Is held in great esteem by God.	18	4	i.	214
And even by the devil.	18	5	i.	216
Holy servants of God expose their lives to danger for the sake of saving one soul.	18	6, 7	i.	216
And yet it is thought little of by most people.	18	8	i.	217
Generally the body is more looked after.	18	9, 10	i.	218
It is sold for a most wretched price.	18	11	i.	219

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
Blindness of men who thus undervalue their souls.	18	12	i.	220
We have only one soul, therefore we must guard it most carefully.	19	1 to 6	i.	223
Many treat their only soul as if they had thousands of souls to lose.	19	7, 8, 9	i.	227
Many sacrifice their souls to the devil, and help him to destroy other souls.	19	11 to 14	i.	230
Prayer to God to guard our souls.	19	15	i.	234
The soul loves the body.	31	2	i.	377
State.				
The choice of a state is a most important affair, for on it, generally speaking, depends eternal happiness or misery.	20	2	i.	236
Must not be determined on without asking advice.	20	3	i.	237
No one can give good advice herein but God alone.	20	4	i.	238
Not to follow that advice in this matter is to endanger one's eternal salvation.	20	5	i.	239
Most children select, without thinking, the first state that offers.	20	7	i.	241
They ask advice, but not from God.	20	8	i.	243
Many parents appoint, according to their own will, states for their children.	20	9	i.	243
Thus sinning against God and against their children.	20	11	i.	246
How to act in the selection of a state. The whole Sermon.	21		i.	250
A certain state is the means of attaining our last end.	21	2	i.	251
Hence each one must consider which state is for him the safest means to attain his last end.	21	3, 4	i.	252
And whether he has the abilities necessary for this state.	21	5	i.	254
Many parents and children fail herein, to the detriment of both.	21	6	i.	254
We must consider whether the state is in accordance with the will of God.	21	8	i.	256
How to know the will of God herein.	21	11, 12	i.	257
Children must be careful not to incur the danger of eternal ruin by entering on a state without or against the will of God.	21	13, 14	i.	259
What they must do who have chosen a state without asking advice from God, or against His will.	21	15	i.	261
In all states there are temptations and dangers.	25	1	i.	301
In all states there are temptations and dangers.	28	1	i.	339

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
In all states there are temptations and dangers.	68	4	ii.	395
God has appointed a state for each one, and therefore each one must be satisfied with his state. The whole Sermon.	65		ii.	350
Folly of those who are not content, and there are many such.	65	8 to end.	ii.	357
Folly of those who are not content, and there are many such.	66	11	ii.	373
Folly of those who are not content, and there are many such.	67	2 to 5	ii.	380
God has appointed different states for the general and particular welfare of all men. The whole Sermon.	66		ii.	363
That difference necessary for the preservation of the world.	66	1 to 8	ii.	364
No one could serve God better in any other state than in his own.	67	1 to 5	ii.	380
He would not serve God in another state.	67	5 to end.	ii.	383
How every one must serve God daily, according to his state.	67	13	ii.	390
Every one must be content with his state, even as far as spiritual dangers are concerned. The whole Sermon.	68		ii.	391
To no purpose do we try to throw the blame of our sins on our state.	68	3	ii.	394
In another state one would sin more, although the dangers might be less.	68	6	ii.	398
How every one has to employ the present day, according to his state.	76	8 to end.	ii.	498

Subjects.

Their duties towards temporal and spiritual superiors. The whole Sermon.	52		ii.	170
Disobedience and disrespect of subjects towards superiors punished by God.	52	11, 12	ii.	180

Superiors.

Must be for the general welfare.	52	2, 3, 4	ii.	172
Have their authority from God.	52	5, 6	ii.	175
Govern instead of God.	52	7	ii.	176
Must be held in honor, no matter what they are personally.	52	8, 9, 10	ii.	177

—T.—

Temptation.

All men suffer it.	25	1	i.	301
Means against it.	25	7	i.	306

Thankfulness.

How thankful we must be to God for calling us to the true faith. The whole Sermon.	2		i.	24

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
How thankful we must be to the holy guardian angels.	5	10 to end.	i.	59
Thanksgiving.				
Ought to be made every evening for benefits received.	75	2	ii.	481
Time.				
How lost time may be redeemed in old age. The whole Sermon.	70		ii.	418
In a short time a zealous person may merit more than another in a longer time.	70	12, 13	ii.	428
The present and future time must be made good use of. The whole Sermon.	71		ii.	432
Value of time.	71	2 to 5	ii.	434
Time is lost, especially in youth, in doing nothing, in doing evil, and in doing something else besides what one ought to do.	71	6 to end.	ii.	436
Time (Evening).				
Every Christian should examine his conscience in the evening. The whole Sermon	75		ii.	480
Utility of that examen.	75	7	ii.	485
Time (Morning).				
The best time for prayer, and the most pleasing to God, is the early morning; therefore that time should be given to prayer, in preference to all other occupations. The whole Sermon.	73		ii.	457
Vain excuses of many, who say they cannot give this time to prayer.	73	9 to end.	ii.	463
How useful prayer is in the morning.	74	2 to 9	ii.	468
In what this prayer consists, and what is the best kind.	74	9 to end.	ii.	473
Tobias.				
How he taught his son.	41	6	ii.	37
Trouble.				
In public as well as private trouble we learn best how to pray. The whole Sermon.	38		i.	456
We must thank God for troubles as for a great benefit.	38	18, 19	i.	467
—U.—				
Unity.				
Makes the happiness of everything. *See Married People.*	30	1, 2	i.	365

Unmarried State.	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
How happy it is. The whole Sermon.	24		i.	290
Not all unmarried people belong to it.	24	1, 2	i.	290
Who belong to it.	24	3	i.	292
Praise of this state.	24	4 and fol.	i.	292
Dangers and graces of this state. The whole Sermon.	25		i.	300
Unmarried people are tempted by the devil, the world and the flesh.	25	2 to 5	i.	302
They are protected by Christ.	25	5, 6	i.	304
Means for the unmarried to preserve purity.	25	7	i.	306

—V.—

Virgins.				
Have God as their Bridegroom.	24	7, 8, 9	i.	295
Folly of those who lose their virginity in youth.	24	10	i.	297
What a great treasure they lose.	24	11	i.	298
Means of preserving it.	25	7	i.	306

Vocation.

To the true faith. *See Faith.*
To the religious life. *See Religious Life.*

—W.—

Wife.				
Wives are in danger of being perverted by their husbands.	28	10, 11	i.	344
Many have reason to complain of their husbands.	31	11	i.	383
How they must behave when their husbands give them cause for dissension. The whole Sermon.	32		i.	386
Duty of wives towards their husbands. The whole Sermon.	33		i.	397
Must be subject to their husbands.	33	3, 4, 5	i.	399
How, and in what they must obey.	33	6	i.	401
Thus they will be able to rule their husbands.	33	7, 8	i.	402
Must be faithful to them in domestic matters.	33	9	i.	402
Must love them constantly.	33	10, 11	i.	403
Many act contrary to that.	33	12 to 15	i.	405
How to act so as not to give husbands cause for jealousy.	34	6, 7	i.	414

Will (of God).				
The state I choose must be in conformity with the will of God.	21	8	i.	256
The merit of a good work consists in that.	21	9	i.	256
How to know the will of God.	21	11, 12	i.	257

	Sermon.	Marginal Note.	Vol.	Page.
Work.				
A number of works, each of which is lawful in itself, may be sinful.	57	1	ii.	238
The perfection of good works makes the merit, and not the length of time they take.	70	10	ii.	427
Worldly Goods.				
In them true happiness not to be found.	7	2	i.	76
Are only empty goods.	7	3	i.	77
Uncertain goods.	7	4	i.	78
Imperfect and mixed with unhappiness.	7	5	i.	79
Inconstant and short-lived.	7	6	i.	80
Yet most men seek their happiness in them, but in vain.	7	7	i.	81
No joy in the Lord can be found in such goods.	22	7, 8	i.	268
Worldly Judgment.				
Fails in considering the religious state.	23	1	i.	263
—Y.—				
Youth.				
God especially desires to be served in time of youth.	13	3	i.	148
Youth is the purest time.	13	3	i.	148
Is generally the time of temptation.	13	4	i.	149
Is especially loved by God.	13	6	i.	150
Is generally spent in a most miserable way, and is unjustly taken away from God.	13	7, 8	i.	151
Therefore a terrible curse must be feared.	13	9	i.	154
Very foolish to do in youth what one must afterwards be sorry for.	13	10 and fol.	i.	155
As children are in their youth, so will they generally be in after life. The whole Sermon.	14		i.	159
How ill the time of youth is spent.	71	7 to end.	ii.	463

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